

Cairo-Amman Bank van robbed

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — In what could be the biggest robbery in West Bank history, armed men seized \$500,000 from a van taking money to the Cairo-Amman Bank in Ramallah, the head of the bank said on Sunday. The manager of the Ramallah-based bank said the bank's car was taking money from one bank to another on Saturday. The robbers escaped. "The bank's car had four passengers and was headed from Hebron to Ramallah [on a road controlled by Israel]. The car was forced to stop after armed men in a stolen car shot at them, but nobody was wounded," he told Israel's Army Radio. He said the armed robbers stripped the bank's unarmed employees of their \$500,000 load. He said he did not know whether the robbers were Israeli or Palestinian. Customers would not be hurt because the bank was insured, the manager, identified only as Abu George, said. "I think it's the biggest bank robbery... We are not accustomed to bank robberies."

Jordan Times

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جورديان تايمز جومعة يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية - الراي.

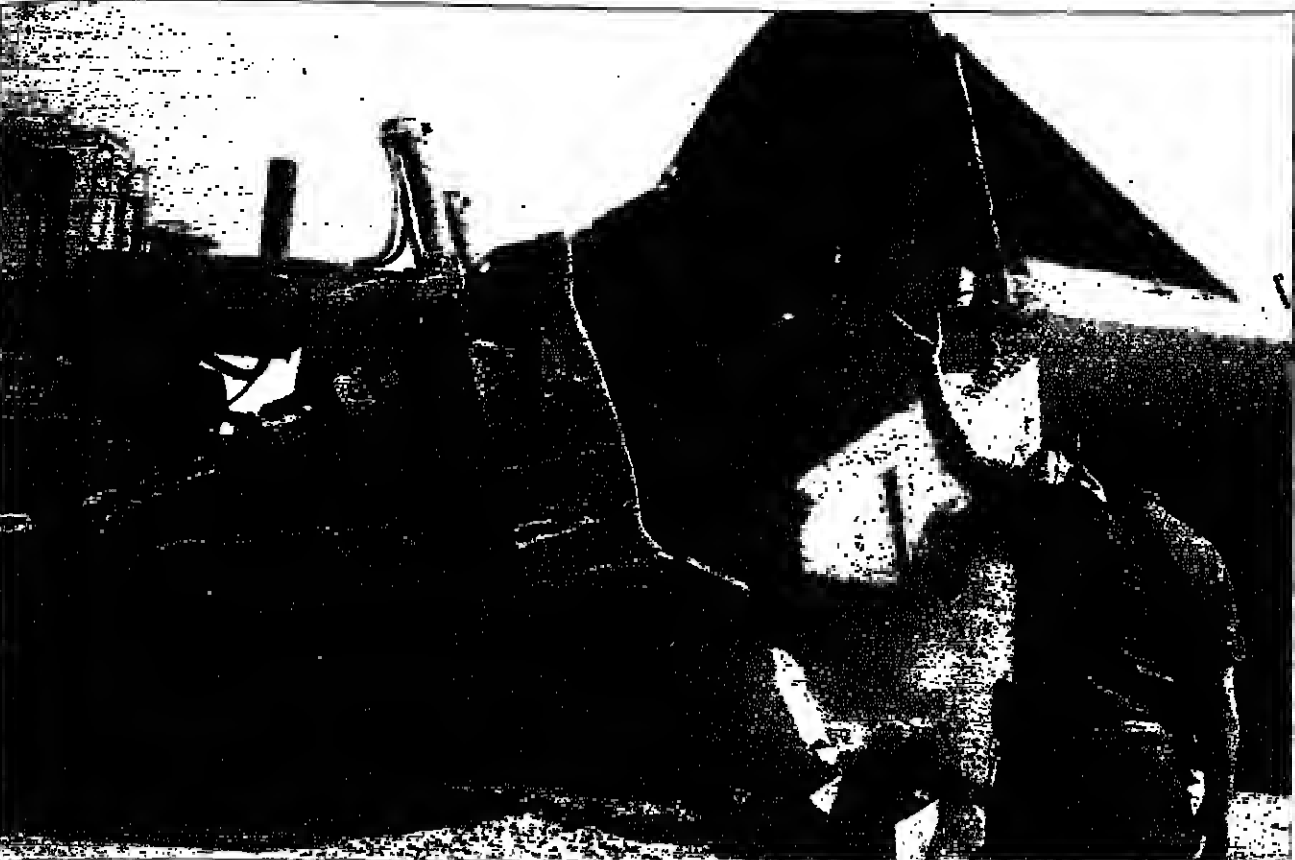
King, Albright discuss peace talks

WASHINGTON (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday discussed with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks, the implementation of Wye River accord as well as bilateral relations, Jordan Television reported on Sunday. Albright inquired about King Hussein's health condition, wished him well and voiced her appreciation of his efforts to bring success to the Wye River agreement. King Hussein and Albright reviewed the latest developments following the signing of the Wye accord. The two sides also called on both Israelis and Palestinians to fully implement the accord in order to arrive at a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the region. King Hussein and Albright also discussed bilateral relations and means of enhancing them in various fields. Albright stressed her country's support to Jordan, particularly in economic and development-related fields.

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An Israeli soldier directs a bulldozer as it begins tearing down a house outside of Hebron which belonged to the family of Akram Maswadeh on Sunday. Maswadeh, currently being held in Israeli jail, is accused of providing the home to two Palestinian brothers, Imad and Adel Awadallah, who were both leaders of the military wing of the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas, and who Israel claims were planning suicide bombing attacks from the property. The Israeli army attacked and killed the two Awadallah brothers in the home two months ago (Reuters photo)

PNA: Israeli refusal to release political prisoners an 'insult'

GAZA CITY (AFP) — The Palestinian National Authority reacted angrily Sunday to Israel's refusal to release more political prisoners as part of the Wye River agreement, calling the move an "insult" and arguing that a true peace agreement would mean the liberation of all Palestinian detainees.

"Releasing common criminals instead of political prisoners is an insult to the Palestinian Authority," said the Palestinian minister in charge of prisoner affairs, Hisham Abdul Razek.

He said all 750 Palestinian prisoners, to be freed from Israeli jails in three stages as part of the accord, were to have been political prisoners and not common criminals.

"Under a peace accord you must free all prisoners without making distinctions," he told AFP.

Speaking in Hebrew on

Israel Radio earlier, he said: "We made war and there were deaths on both sides but that's the past. We are not asking for the release of those arrested since the peace process began or those who put bombs on buses."

Israel released the first batch of 250 prisoners on Friday under the Wye accord but 150 common criminals were in the group and only 100 political prisoners, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly said he would not free those who have Israeli "blood on their hands."

"We reject Netanyahu's statement concerning Jewish blood on their hands because we were not having a picnic with the Israelis. We were at war, Jewish blood is not more precious than ours," Abdul Razek told AFP.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat sent a letter to U.S. President Bill Clinton to

protest the Israeli move. Palestinian international cooperation minister Nabil Shaath told reporters.

A Palestinian prisoners' group fiercely attacked Arafat's leadership Sunday, saying he had signed a faulty accord that gave the Jewish state full control over which detainees are to be freed.

Palestinian negotiators "were supposed to come back with a clear arrangement concerning the prisoners. But in the text of the accord, there's nothing. It's only a verbal agreement," said Issa Karaka, director of a solidarity group with Palestinian prisoners.

"They left it to Israel to decide who, when and how they would be liberated. Above all I blame the Palestinians," Karaka said.

In Israel's Meggido prison, three prisoners from Arafat's Fatah movement launched a hunger strike to demand their

liberation and said that 400 other prisoners would join their effort "if the Palestinian Authority continues to neglect them."

Israeli Interior Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani confirmed earlier that the Jewish state had no plans to liberate more than 200 Palestinian political prisoners.

"Under a verbal understanding between Benjamin Netanyahu and Bill Clinton as part of the Wye accord, Israel is to release a total of 750 Palestinians — 200 detained for security reasons and the others common criminals," he said.

"We have no intention of releasing people who killed our children, but I plan to continue negotiations on the subject with Mahmoud Abbas," Arafat's deputy, Kahalani told Israel Radio.

(Continued on page 7)

King fully recovered, Tarawneh reassures Parliament members

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh

AMMAN — Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh on Sunday told deputies and senators during a special Parliament session that His Majesty King Hussein has "fully recovered" from lymphatic cancer and will return soon to the country.

King Hussein has been at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota since July 14 undergoing treatment for non-Hodgkins lymphoma. The Constitution stipulates that "if the King is away from the country for more than four months and Parliament is in recess, it should be summoned for a session to examine the situation."

Tarawneh told the parliamentarians that after completing the sixth and final round of treatment and convalescing, the monarch will return to the Kingdom.

The last cycle of treatment includes a slightly higher dose of chemotherapy as well as an autologous blood transplant in which stem cells removed from the King's body at the start of his treatment will be put back, a standard procedure in such cases, according to physicians.

The King is expected to be back in Amman by the end of December. During yesterday's session, which deputies described as a "formality," both Senate Speaker Zeid Rifai and Lower House Speaker Sa'd Hayel Sour wished the King a safe return to the country.

The session, which lasted for less than an hour, marks the first meeting of both Houses since the inauguration of the 13th Parliament last November.

After the session, Parliament issued a statement expressing total loyalty to the King and the Hashemite Throne and its pride in His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, and the Hashemite family.

A Royal Decree was issued Sunday summoning Parliament for an ordinary session on Nov. 28. The session will be inaugurated with a Speech from the Throne delivered by Prince Hassan who will be presenting the speech for the first time due to King Hussein's absence.

Aziz calls Butler's demands 'provocative'

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq said on Sunday that "provocative" requests for documents by the chief U.N. weapons inspector were intended to provide the United States with a pretext for a military attack and to prolong sanctions.

"He [Richard Butler] is either creating a superficial pretext to justify the American aggression or he is trying to confuse and undermine the comprehensive review," Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz said.

"Butler is a tool used for the purpose of provocation and for the purpose of creating crises and he is carrying out this unprofessional and dishonorable role," Aziz told reporters.

It was his first reaction to last week's demands by Butler, chairman of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of scrapping Iraq's prohibited weapons programmes. The United States said on Sunday that Iraq's objections to Butler's requests for the documents were unreasonable.

U.S. National Security Adviser Sandy Berger said the United Nations had sought more information from Baghdad and said he hoped it would respond quickly.

"We don't think it's a reasonable objection," Berger said in Seoul where he is accompanying U.S. President Bill Clinton.

"Mr. Butler has said that their response is not satisfactory. He's gone back to them and asked for further information and we hope and expect to get that," Berger added, declining to say whether there was any deadline for a reply. "We would hope they would respond positively and quickly."

Berger said Washington was still ready to take military action if Iraq failed to cooperate with U.N. inspectors. U.N. monitors went out to inspect weapons sites on Sunday for a fifth straight day since an Iraqi climbdown, in the face of imminent U.S.-led air strikes, allowed them to resume work.

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Economy, trade to top agenda in Jordanian-Israeli talks today

By Aifa A. Toukan and Amy Henderson

AMMAN — Economic and trade affairs are expected to top today's agenda when His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, and senior Jordanian officials meet in Amman with Israeli Foreign and Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon and Minister of Industry and Trade Natan Sharansky.

According to an official, the peace process and final status issues will also be tackled. "Issues related to the peace process will be discussed, including final status issues," the official told the Jordan

Times.

But impediments to bilateral trade with Israel and Jordanian exports to the West Bank self-rule areas are to be focused on, in line with Amman's accusations that Israel has resisted easing an iron-grip on the valuable West Bank market by imposing rigorous standards and specifications tests, and subjecting goods and vehicles crossing the King Hussein Bridge to opaque security checks (see related story).

Since signing its trade and transport agreements with Israel in 1996, Jordan has also registered similar complaints regarding attempts to export its products to the Israeli market.

"We have specific [examples] where there are Israeli impediments, and we want them to be dealt with," said a government official. Jordanian officials said today's bilateral trade talks will focus on increasing the A1 and A2 list of goods that the Palestinians are allowed to import from countries other than Israel, as well as the Jewish state's standards and specifications tests.

Discussions are also likely to include the joint Aqaba-Eilat airport, dubbed the "Peace Airport." One of several high-profile proposed joint projects, the 1994 peace treaty stipulates studying the idea of building a new airport in the south to

serve both Aqaba and Eilat. But so far, Jordan and Israel have yet to move beyond the pilot phase of the joint use of the current Aqaba airport.

Other topics include joint water projects, such as desalination, and the Jordan Rift Valley project which has yet to see the light of day.

Jordan's trade volume with the Palestinian territories for 1997 stood at JD35 million, of which only JD12.1 million were Jordanian exports. Israel exports approximately \$2.5 billion annually to the Palestinians.

(Continued on page 7)

Jordan, Syria to establish early warning system to monitor Yarmouk River water

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — Jordan and Syria have agreed to set up an "early warning" system to monitor the quality of Yarmouk River water flowing into the Kingdom, government officials said on Sunday.

They said the Syrians agreed to set up several water stations to monitor the river's water before it reaches Jordan, which has plans to construct a JD50 million wastewater treatment plant near the border.

The decision will be included in a memorandum on the proceedings of two days of talks by a Jordanian-Syrian committee that ended in Amman on Sunday, they added.

The memo, to be signed on Monday by Jordan Valley Authority Secretary General Dureid Mahasneh and Barakat Hadid, Syria's Water Ministry secretary general, also includes plans by Syria to provide Amman with a weekly report on the quality of river water entering the Kingdom.

Jordanian officials have complained in recent months about receiving low-quality water from the Yarmouk River because of wastewater that was leaking into the river's tributaries in Syria.

Damascus has so far made no official comment on the Jordanian complaints.

The committee also agreed to go ahead with the construction of the joint Wihdeh Dam

on the river and seek funding for the project, which is expected to have a storage capacity of 225 million cubic metres (mcm) of water, officials said.

The cost of the dam, initially put at JD283 million, was revised to JD152 million, the officials added.

The project, part of an agreement signed in 1987, has been delayed by lack of funds, dormant political tension between the two countries over their regional roles and Israeli reservations over the dam pending a regional peace settlement.

Syria also agreed to Jordanian demands to allow it to secure its full share of water coming from the river, estimated at 220 mcm in line with

an agreement reached in 1987 that was based on an Arab League agreement reached in 1955.

The dam would help Jordan store additional water supplies. The water deal, devised by a special committee, set Jordan's annual share at 330 mcm and 90 mcm for Syria, which currently gets 220 mcm a year. However, Jordanian officials said their country was only getting up to 135 mcm a year from the 1955 share.

The river begins in Syria, flows along the two countries' border and then joins the Jordan River downstream from Lake Tiberias.

(Continued on page 7)

Four committees to examine IPC deal, conditions of pipes

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — After bailing the Iraqi Petroleum Company pipelines deal, the government Sunday gave the green light to four committees to examine the pipes' present condition, Minister of Water and Irrigation and Energy Hani Mulki told the Jordan Times.

"We have formed two independent field technical committees that began working on the present condition of the Iraqi Petroleum Company pipelines in Rweished and Aqaba areas," Mulki said Sunday.

"We also formed two other committees to meet on Wednesday to assess the technical and administrative aspects of the pipelines deal," he added.

He pointed out that the administrative committee comprises representatives of the Tenders Department, Audit Bureau, Supply Department, and Ministry of Energy, while the assessing technical committee comprises representatives of the Jordan University of Science and Technology, Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company, Royal Scientific Society and the Institution for Standards and Metrology.

The government decided Saturday after an ordinary Cabinet session to halt all procedures related to the sale of the Iraqi Petroleum Company pipelines, pending the completion of investigations into the legality of the bid and studies of possible uses of the pipelines.

Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh met Saturday with three Lower House deputies who presented him with a memorandum signed by 41 of their colleagues urging the government to halt the sale of 50 kilometres of 12-inch pipelines and 60 kilometres of 16-inch pipelines worth JD250,000, and called for an immediate investigation into the legality of the deal.

Deputies Salameh Hiani, Ali Abu Rbeila and Mahmoud Kharabshah were quoted by a local daily on Sunday as saying that they were pleased with the Prime Minister's understanding, and later the Cabinet decision for halting the sale of the pipes to a businessperson, Akram Amin Abu Amr, who won the bid on July 20, 1998.

The government asked Abu Amr to stop working immediately as he was violating the deal by taking parts of another pipelines that were not included in the official bid.

"I have sent a legal memorandum through the ministry's lawyer regarding the violation of the bid, and also telling the contractor to stop his work immediately," Mulki said.

But Abu Amr himself claimed in a letter sent to the head of the Jordan Water Authority, dated Aug. 10, that several pipeline components listed in the official bid were not found due to the fact that no maps were available.

The government also decided to stop exporting any parts of the pipelines.

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A frustrating peace: Jordan-Israel ties five years on

By Ghadeer Taher

AMMAN — What benefits did peace bring to Jordan? Ask many Jordanians into the fifth year of Jordan's peace treaty with Israel. Too little is the answer given by many who are still waiting for the promised prosperity.

Perhaps yesterday's meeting between more than 20 members of the exclusively Israeli Israel-Jordan Chamber of Commerce and an equal number of Jordanian businessmen, is a telling sign. Till today, there is no Jordanian counterpart to the Israeli Chamber, and both heads of Jordan's industry, as well as commerce chambers, refuse to do business with Israel.

The high expectations that fol-

lowed the signing of the treaty in October 1994, fuelled by top-level official promises of better days to come, have all but vanished today. Rightly or wrongly, many Jordanians now blame the deepening economic recession and the decline in their standards of living on the peace treaty with Israel, which has been the favourite punching bag for the opposition.

In a region where the most mundane issues become politicised, economic relations between Jordan and Israel are held hostage by the stalemate on the Israeli-Palestinian track. Jordanian officials say, Mincing no words, His Royal

Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, speaking at an international conference in Amman last September, said: "There is no tangible result to show for all our

News analysis

patience. Yet we keep indulging ourselves in the hope that a successful end will soon unfold." The Regent ascribed the failure of peace dividends to materialise to the absence of political movement on the Palestinian-Israeli track. Israel's relentless grip on the West Bank market, seen as an untapped arena for Jordanian exports, has only compounded the

frustration of Jordanians. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's policies have further depressed the mood in the region, inhibiting domestic and foreign investments and undercutting potential growth in tourism revenues, according to Jordanian

officials. "We have had a double blow: the collapse of expectations related to the peace process combined with a real recession," observed a Jordanian economist, noting that the Kingdom is grappling with chronic unemployment, rising poverty, and dismal economic growth. It also services a heavy debt burden.

"Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, we cannot say we have not had achievements, including some in tourism, joint ventures in Irbid, the Aqaba-Eilat airport and attracting investment," said a politician. "But it is not exactly what we had forecast. We cannot say projects were implemented seriously impacting the Jordanian economy."

"The envisaged economic benefits were seen as the glue that would cement the political agreement," another politician said. "Countries which have vast scopes of cooperation and joint interests are less likely to engage in war."

(Continued on page 7)

Israelis ousted from disused train station in new settlement bid

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Dozens of Jewish settlers took over an abandoned railway station near the West Bank town of Nablus Sunday in a bid to establish a new settlement there but evacuated after a few hours to avoid being forced out by the Israeli army.

The 12- to 16-year olds told army radio that the military had promised them they would be able to return "soon" with the government's permission.

The youths told the radio earlier they had occupied the station "with the intention of building a new settlers' site and renewing the Jewish presence there."

The youths, all from the neighbouring Shvei Shimon settlement, moved into the Sebastia train station, which has remained unused since the end of the British mandate in Palestine in 1947.

The area is off limits under the orders of the Israeli army, which urged the teens to leave the premises.

Israelis first tried to settle Sebastia in 1975 but were forced to evacuate by then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Two years later the Menachem Begin government allowed the establishment of the nearby settlement of "Samaria," the biblical

name for the northern West Bank still used by Israeli hardliners, but it did not include the Sebastia station.

Another group of settlers, from the highly militant Itamar settlement near the divided West Bank city of Nablus, occupied a nearby hill with the intention of establishing a new settlement.

Meanwhile, Palestinian officials said that Jewish settlers moved eight mobile homes onto new West Bank territory Friday, two outside the Palestinian village of Yata and the remainder near the village of Surif.

Both villages remain under Israeli military control.



A Jewish settler Sunday plants the Israeli flag atop one of the buildings at the ancient ruins of Sebastiyah, north of Jenin, in a bid to establish a new Jewish settlement (Reuters photo)

Settlers propose stockpiling weapons for 'security'

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli settlers in the West Bank called Sunday for the settlement to adopt drastic measures, including the stockpiling of weapons, to ensure security following the withdrawal of Israeli troops as part of the peace agreement with the Palestinians.

"We are calling for each settlement to have its own helicopter and back-up security generator, as well as a stockpile of automatic weapons and gas," settlers' spokesman Shimon Fibler told AFP.

"We want armoured, bullet-proof buses. The security system is not adequate. We also need to improve lighting on the roads to enhance safety," he said.

Israel Radio reported that the Israeli army had proposed \$1 million of security equipment, including the construction of anti-tank trenches, military posts, security walls and electric fences.

A dozen roads that will allow settlers to drive around areas under Palestinian control are also due to be built.

The Israeli army began its withdrawal from a further 13 per cent of the West Bank on Friday, as called for by the Wye River accord signed with the Palestinians on Oct. 23.

After the withdrawal is completed there will be 18 Jewish settlements in a Palestinian autonomous sector of the West Bank.

Israeli defence official General Gaby Ophir is due to inspect the security capabilities of the settlements.

Israel's Finance Minister Yehuda Neuman left for the United States on Sunday to discuss an Israeli request for \$1.2 billion to help finance the railway withdrawal.

Israel is seeking U.S. help to offset the costs of the West Bank pullback, and the newspaper Haaretz said the Jewish state could receive an increase in the amount of annual military aid it receives from the United States.

It said the funding was likely to come as military assistance unrelated to the West Bank in order to avoid helping Jewish settlements.

Sudan seizes arms from pro-government militias

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudanese authorities have completed the seizure of weapons from pro-government militia leaders in Khartoum in a bid to end factional fighting, the official Sudan News Agency (SUNA) reported on Sunday.

The campaign of collection of arms from the southern factions which was implemented recently in Khartoum state was completed with success, SUNA quoted Major General Osman Jafar Osman, police commander of

Khartoum state, as saying. Osman said faction leaders had not objected to the operation, adding the arms held by the militias were not huge in quantity and consisted mainly of assault rifles and pistols.

But, the southern factions criticised police behaviour during the operation, which started on Thursday.

In a statement issued on Saturday, the Coordinating Council, the government of war-torn southern Sudan, said it recognised the Khartoum authorities had the right to

preserve security but condemned what it described as "excesses."

"There were excesses committed in the implementation [of the operation], which were unjustified," the council said, warning the authorities "not to repeat" those mistakes.

It gave no details, but Eliza Hon, chief of staff of the South Sudan Defence Force (SSDF), formed by the militia after they signed a peace agreement with the government in 1997, said he and many of his commanders

were not given advance warning.

Khartoum residents, however, were jubilant at the operation, which has been demanded by northerners.

The Wifaq daily said in a headline that "the place of the SSDF is 40 miles [south of southern Sudan's main town Juba] not Dehinat [a Khartoum suburb]."

At least two people were killed in clashes between southern factions in Khartoum this year.

Riek Machar, chairman of

the Coordinating Council and leader of the SSDF, said last week his main rival Paulino Matip had accepted a truce between their militias in Unity state.

Splits in the pro-government militia coalition have complicated 15 years of civil war between Khartoum and the main rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which has been fighting for autonomy in the mainly Christian and animist south from the Muslim, Arabised north of Sudan.

Somali armed faction closes crucial road from Mogadishu

MOGADISHU (AFP) — A Somali warlord on Sunday banned all commercial vehicles, including those belonging to aid agencies, from the key road linking Mogadishu to the southern central town of Baidoa until further notice, citing security concerns.

Colonel Hassan Mohammad Nur "Shargudud" said his Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA) would destroy on sight any vehicle that violated the ban.

"RRA fighters have been given orders to attack," Shargudud told AFP by radio from the town of Huddur.

He accused the south Mogadishu strongman Hussein Muhammad Aided of using the road to transport militia and to move pickup trucks with mounted guns to Baidoa to launch an attack on Huddur, which the RRA seized from Aided's control last

month.

The town is currently under Aided's control, but comes under frequent attacks by RRA fighters.

"At least 14 extra armed wagons have arrived Baidoa in the past six days and many more are in Mogadishu ready to go to the town," Shargudud added.

Militia sources confirmed on Sunday that Aided's Somali National Alliance faction had set up a large militia camp in Baidoa following the humiliating defeat by the RRA in Huddur.

Huddur and Baidoa, which are inhabited by Rahanwein subclans, were captured by Aided's father, the late General Muhammad Farah Aided in September 1995.

"An announcement will be made when the road is opened after security measures have been taken by the RRA command," Sha-

argudud said. He did not say what the security operation would entail.

The RRA had earlier this month appealed to humanitarian agencies to send food and medical supplies to Huddur and neighbouring villages where, it said, hundreds of people are threatened by famine and disease.

The closure of the roads means that the relief supplies cannot reach the needy.

The south-central regions of Bay and Bakol have been especially hard hit by poor harvests caused by floods earlier this year, and persistent factional fighting has continued to hamper aid deliveries, according to the World Food Programme.

"We understand the humanitarian situation in our regions, but we want to avoid political and military setbacks for the RRA," said Shargudud.

Probe request over Saudi 'prison' in a Cairo hotel

CAIRO (AP) — Parliament wants to question the government about the case of a Saudi prince who allegedly "turned part of a hotel suite into a prison for his servants," Egypt's Middle East News Agency reported Sunday.

Prince Turki Ben Abdul Aziz, who is King Fahd's brother, has been investigated by police for allegedly locking up his Egyptian servants in the 29th floor suite where he and his wife have lived for years.

MENA said a deputy has asked Prime Minister Kamal Al Ganzoury to answer questions on whether the government is taking any action against the Saudi prince in the case which received wide publicity in Egypt.

Twenty-seven other deputies supported the motion and asked for an emergency debate on the problem, MENA said.

Two of the prince's servants escaped from a room in the Ramses Hilton Hotel on Monday by knocking sheets together and lowering themselves

through a window to the 24th floor.

The two men told police that the prince locked them in the room after they complained of mistreatment. They said other servants were locked up, too.

Prince Turki, one of King Fahd's six brothers, has been living in Egypt for years since he fell out with the royal family. He rents two floors of the Ramses Hilton for his family and entourage.

Earlier this year, police launched an investigation into claims that Turki and his wife mistreated and locked up their servants. The latest incident follows also several complaints about the prince's bodyguards, including Americans, beating up people who got in their way.

The move to debate Prince Turki's behaviour in parliament signals that the government is fed up and may want to deport the prince. In an advertisement in an opposition paper Sunday, Turki complained about a publicly campaign to discredit him.

Israel to ask U.S. for \$1.2b to finance West Bank withdrawal

Israel's Finance Minister Yehuda Neuman left for the United States on Sunday to discuss an Israeli request for \$1.2 billion to help finance the railway withdrawal.

Israel is seeking U.S. help to offset the costs of the West Bank pullback, and the newspaper Haaretz said the Jewish state could receive an increase in the amount of annual military aid it receives from the United States.

It said the funding was likely to come as military assistance unrelated to the West Bank in order to avoid helping Jewish settlements.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran closes embassies to save money

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran, whose economy has been hard hit by collapsing oil prices, is cutting back on the number of its embassies abroad in an effort to save money, newspapers reported here Sunday. The foreign ministry will close its missions in Burkina Faso, Gabon, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Tanzania, where Iran has minimal economic interests, the English-language Tehran Times said. Other missions targeted for closure are the embassies in Brunei and Nicaragua, the consulates in Munich and Shanghai and an unnamed mission in "northern Afghanistan." Other embassies that were not named are set to cut staff, though Iran is due to open an embassy in Hong Kong.

Kuwait undecided on U.S. conference

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait said on Sunday it had not yet decided whether to accept a U.S. invitation to a conference in support of the Israeli-Palestinian peace deal. Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah said Kuwait had received an invitation to the conference in Washington on Nov. 30 but "the government is [still] thinking about it and has not yet taken a decision." He was speaking to reporters after his Egyptian counterpart Amr Musa arrived in Kuwait on an official visit. Kuwait's government welcomed October's Wye River accord but the country's elected parliament has strongly criticised it. Lebanon has rejected the invitation to attend the conference, which is expected to be at the foreign minister level. In response to repeated calls by Washington for Arab states to normalise ties with Israel after the Wye River accord, Sheikh Sabah said: "The strategy of the Arab World is a comprehensive peace in the whole region... not [just] the Palestinians and the Israelis but Syria and Lebanon too."

'Egypt wants better ties with Iran'

MUSCAT (AP) — Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said Sunday that his country wants to improve ties with Iran, with whom it has been at odds since Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution. "We are for positive relations between Iran and Egypt. It is important for there to be a mutual desire for better relations," he said at a press conference in Oman. But an Iranian newspaper on Sunday criticised Egypt for lagging in improving ties with Iran. "Less talk and more action is needed if Egypt is to experience normalisation of ties with Iran," said the Iran News, which is close to the foreign ministry. Since President Mohammad Khatami took office last year relations between the two nations "warmed slightly," the paper said. "Unfortunately, however, no practical steps have been taken."

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 Batman
15:30 David Copper Field
16:00 Neighbours
16:30 Des Chiffres Et Des Lettres
17:00 Thalassa
18:15 Drama - Wind at My Back
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French Programme
19:30 News headlines
19:33 Parenthood
20:00 The Internet Cafe
20:30 Drama - Big Sky
21:30 Encounter
22:00 News in English
22:30 Drama - The Fix
23:30 Comedy - Keeping Up Appearances
23:59 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:45 Fair
06:06 (Sunrise) Doha
11:22 Dhulur
14:13 Asr
16:38 Maghreb
17:58 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366

Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811
St. Aftem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel.
4637430
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifeh
Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic
Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church
4771331
The Armenian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Skies will be partly cloudy with

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

scattered showers expected in the southern parts of the Kingdom, and winds southerly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be partly cloudy, rainy, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 13/25
Aqaba 17/30
Deserts 11/27
Jordan Valley 20/32

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 25 Aqaba 30 Humidity readings: Amman 20 per cent, Aqaba 41 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun 11/21
Jerash 15/27
Um Qays 13/26
Madaba 12/25
Petra 12/25
Dead Sea 18/33

Dr. Fakher Bilal 552233
AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy 5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004
Ruba Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Mohammad Abul Hajja 0279325
Fou'ad Pharmacy 021275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Hisham Sharabati 0998632
Palestine Pharmacy 09983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 4775121
Highway Police 5343402
Traffic Police 4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 0132

Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Televisi 4773111
Radio Jordan 4774111
Water Authority 5680101
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53300

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic, Abdali 56601317
Husseini Medical Centre 5858656
Luzmila 4630195
Khaldi Maternity 4642816
Akhleh Maternity 4642412
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shamsani 5607071
Shamsani Hospital 5607431
Jordan Hospital 5607550
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667279
Al-Ahli, Abdali 56611646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4771013
Al-Bashir 477511126
Army, Marka 489161115
Queen Alia Hospital 5157100
Amal Hospital 5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 09983323

Zarqa National Hospital 099900560
Ibn Sina Hospital 09986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital 09990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital 02127555
Roman Catholic Hospital 02127275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital 0217101372, 0217103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital 0217102831, 0217102011
Speciality Hospital 0217103100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital 031204111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15 Sana'a (RJ)
08:30 Damascus (RJ)

08:35 Jeddah (RJ)
08:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:30 New Delhi (RJ)
10:00 Beirut (RJ)
16:20 Cairo (RJ)
16:25 London (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:05 Kuwait (RJ)
18:35 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
20:30 Bangkok, Sharjah (RJ)
00:15 Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
05:55 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

Other Flights

08:20 Alexandria (BA)
09:30 Cairo (MS)
10:00 Khartoum (SD)
13:20 Bahrain (GF)
14:45 Doha (QR)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
15:25 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (EK)
17:50 Istanbul (SD)
18:40 Beirut (ME)
19:15 Frankfurt (LH)
22:25 Tel Aviv (LY)
01:25 Amsterdam (KL)
01:25 Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)

09:30 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
10:10 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
10:50 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
00:15 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:30 Beirut (RJ)
11:00 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
11:15 Frankfurt, London (RJ)
12:05 Kuwait (RJ)
12:30 Cairo (RJ)
20:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:45 Abu Dhabi (RJ)
21:15 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
21:20 Damascus (RJ)
22:00 Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
22:00 Tehran (RJ)
22:45 Sana'a (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Other Flights
06:00 Istanbul (TK)
07:25 Paris (AF)
09:05 London (BA)
10:30 Cairo (MS)
11:05 Istanbul (SD)
14:10 Bahrain (GF)
15:30 Vienna (OS)
15:35 Doha (QR)
16:30 Dubai (EK)
18:50 Khartoum (SD)
20:00 Beirut (ME)
23:10 Tel Aviv (LY)
02:25 Amsterdam (KL)
02:45 Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)

07:00 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)
22:00 Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)

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Opposition, women activists hold sit-in at U.S. embassy over Iraq policy

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Opposition parties and women activists Sunday held a sit-in near the U.S. embassy to protest what they called "state terrorism" by the U.S. against Iraq.

More than 50 activists carried anti-U.S. and Britain placards and shouted slogans denouncing what they described as "flagrant aggression" on the part of Washington and London against Baghdad.

"U.S. and U.K., get your forces away from Iraq," read one placard. "Yankees and Britons are the mothers of terrorism," and "U.S. and U.K. support liars and thieves," referring to Washington's support of Iraqi opposition groups, read other placards.

Dozens of anti-riot and regular police officers were stationed around the embassy to prevent protesters from reaching the main gate.

A group representing the demonstrators, headed by activist Leila Khalid, were allowed to approach the embassy's main gate to hand over a letter of protest to the U.S. press attaché.

"This protest is on behalf of all Arab people, who stand firm and determined against

U.S. policy towards Iraq," Khalid told the American official after handing him the letter.

"We believe that this practice constitutes state terrorism against the Iraqi people," she added.

The U.S. envoy told the delegation that he would convey their letter to the U.S. administration but declined to give any comment on his government's stand towards Iraq.

Following the hour-long rally, participants dispersed peacefully.

The rally came one week after the most recent standoff between Iraq and the U.S.

over United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) activities was contained following Baghdad's unconditional agreement to allow inspectors to resume their work.

The government expressed its satisfaction over the peaceful settlement of the Iraq crisis and called on Baghdad to cooperate fully with U.N. inspectors to end the eight-year-old sanctions, imposed following Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Last week, opposition activists staged a sit-in near the Iraqi embassy to show solidarity with the Iraqi people.

Opinion poll finds majority of public support Tarawneh government

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government of Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh enjoys the approval of the majority of Jordanians, according to an opinion poll published by the Arabic daily Al Arab Al Yawm on Sunday.

The poll, conducted between Nov. 18-20 on a random sample of 595 citizens from all governorates, shows that 60 per cent of Jordanians are satisfied with the performance of the government, which was sworn in on Aug. 20.

Only 34 per cent of the interviewees said they were not satisfied with the current government, while six per cent did not

respond.

Karak, home to the 49-year-old premier, was the governorate in which the government is most popular — 90.9 per cent of the interviewees declared themselves satisfied — while Ma'an, Tafleh, and Ajloun, respectively, are the governorates where people are more critical of Tarawneh's 22-member team.

Of those who declared themselves satisfied with the government's performance, 16 per cent described the Cabinet as "highly successful," 38 per cent as "quite successful," and 24 per cent as "successful," while 22 per cent did not answer.

Analysing the results of the premier's team during its first three months in office, 26 per cent of the interviewees said the government did not succeed in fighting corruption, while 56 per cent said it was not successful in mending inter-Arab ties.

On the other hand, 52 per cent of the interviewees said the government boosted national unity, and 37 per cent deemed it successful in restoring public confidence in state institutions.

On the economic level, 70 per cent believed the government was not successful in handling unemployment, and

74 per cent believed it failed to effectively address the issue of poverty.

On the domestic political front, the government's effort to maintain the momentum of a national dialogue initiated by His Majesty King Hussein and HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, this summer was applauded by 35 per cent of the interviewees, while 34 per cent judged the government as unsuccessful in this attempt.

Options on government efforts to deepen democratic practices in the Kingdom were divided, with 38 per cent of respondents satisfied and 35 per cent unsatisfied.

Princess Basma launches U.N. regional campaign to eliminate violence against women

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — HRH Princess Basma on Sunday formally launched the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) regional campaign for eliminating violence against women.

The campaign, being held under the theme "A Life Free of Violence: It is our Right," commemorates the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 50th anniversary of the World Conference on Human Rights with its historical recognition of "Women's Rights are Human Rights."

It aims at raising public awareness on the various forms of violence against women, such as crimes of honour, domestic violence, female circumcision and legal violence, among others.

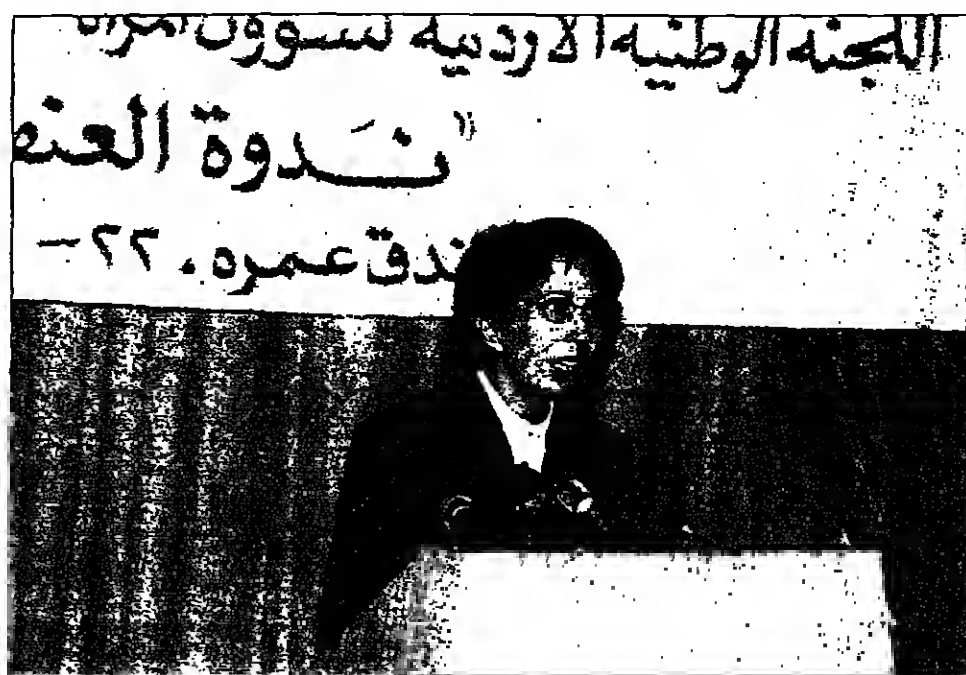
Activities will include a public march, an essay and drawing competition for students, and a roundtable to launch a recent study on violence against women in the Kingdom.

Earlier in the day, Princess Basma told participants at a regional seminar on domestic violence, also part of the regional campaign's activities, that "studying and combating domestic violence in Jordan, as in other countries in the region, still lacks the needed information to understand the dimensions of this important problem and its causes."

"Domestic violence, in all its forms, is a violation of the basic human rights of men and women, which the Islamic religion was the first to call for preserving," the Princess told the gathering.

She added that Jordan supports and believes in the basics of human rights, including women's rights.

Princess Basma pointed to His Majesty King Hussein's Speech from the Throne at the opening of Parliament in November 1997.



HRH Princess Basma delivers an address at the opening of the UNIFEM campaign 'A Life Free of Violence: It is our Right' (Petra photo)

In his remarks, King Hussein said: "We must pay serious attention to some of the dangerous phenomena that remain a source of women's suffering and which, unfortunately, constitute inhuman violations of their basic rights."

During a recent meeting with tribal leaders, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, called for an end to crimes of honour.

"Let us remember that the honour of the whole Jordanian family is more noble than the loss of life of this generation due to the rivalries of 'honour causes,'" Prince Hassan said.

Annually, around 25 to 30 women are reportedly killed in the Kingdom in the name of honour.

Police records for the years 1991 and 1992 indicate that around 9,000 cases of domestic violence against women were registered at the country's police departments.

In his remarks at the seminar, United Nations Resident Representative in Jordan Jorgen Lissner said the event "allow[s] us to celebrate the gradual, but

unmistakable, termination of a taboo that for long has prevented frank and frequent public debate in the Arab region about the complex and excruciating problem of domestic violence."

"The fact that it is possible to hold such a high-profile regional seminar at this time is clearly a sign of the increasing momentum which the human rights debate is gaining in our region," he asserted.

Lissner also pointed out that the campaign against domestic violence is not a women's cause, but rather "part of our common quest for humanity."

"The humanity of abused children and battered wives is grossly infringed upon, but let us not forget that the abusive parent, the violent husband, the woman who shouts at or

starves her domestic helper — they too have lost their humanity, in the same way as the proponents of white supremacy in South Africa and the headline Jews who have no understanding of the pain and suffering of the Palestinians," he said.

Lissner called on all women and men "of goodwill to take

decisive action to eradicate, from all aspects of life, the culture of violence."

"It is time to end the culture of violence, in our homes, in our schools, in our institutions, in our nations," said Lissner.

"It is time to announce, from pulpits and from rooftops, that violence has no place at the core of our lives and that it is possible to establish the required discipline within society and within our families by

tolerance and persuasion, by reason and rationality and by compassion and caring," he added.

Several working papers will be discussed during the two-day meeting from local government and non-governmental organisations and representatives from Egypt, Tunisia and Lebanon.

The symposium, which will conclude today with suggested future outlooks, is being held and organised by the Jordan National Committee for Women in cooperation with five U.N. agencies: UNIFEM, the UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO and the UNFPA.

what's going on

FILMS

"La vie est un long fleuve tranquille" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabel Weibdeh, at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

"The Truth About Cars and Dogs" at the Books @ Café, Jabel Amman, First Circle on Tuesday Nov. 24 at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 4650457).

PLAY

"The Good Kimo" (in Arabic) at Hassan Ibn Talal Auditorium, University of Jordan at 7:00 p.m. (daily until Nov. 29).

LECTURE

"Jordanian-German Cooperation in Archaeological Excavations" by Dr. Zeidan Kafafi at Goethe-Institut, Jabel Amman, at 6:00 p.m.

"The Development of Laws on Protection of Archaeological Buildings in Jordan" by Dr. Ziad Sa'ad at Goethe-Institut, Jabel Amman on Tuesday Nov. 24 at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

Paintings by Farouq Hassan at Orabi Art Gallery, Umm 'Utthana (Tel. 526932), until Nov. 29.

Photography exhibition entitled "Windows and Doors" by Hani Hourani at Baladina Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Dec. 18.

Display of Jordan River Foundation (JRF) 1998 autumn/winter collection entitled "Falling Leaves" at the JRF showroom, Jabel Amman (Tel. 4613081), until Nov. 30.

Crossroads of Civilisations: More Than 100 Years of German Archaeological Activities in Jordan" (sponsored by the German Protestant Institute in cooperation with Petra Store Preservation) at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Nov. 28.

Exhibition of watercolours by Muhsen Haghighat at Instituto Cervantes, Jabel Amman, until Nov. 24.

Paintings by Jordanian artist Mohammad Abu Aziz at the French Cultural Centre, Jabel Amman, until Nov. 28.

Court finds journalist innocent of 'inciting violence' in article

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh

AMMAN — The Court of First Instance has found the chief editor of Al Majd weekly, Fahd Rimawi, innocent of charges of inciting violence in an article published last August calling for "holy war" against Israel, the weekly reported this week.

"We found the accused free of responsibility... as he did not violate the law in any sense," presiding Judge Tawfiq Qaisi said Sunday.

Rimawi told the Jordan Times that he was pleased with the verdict, adding that he had found the government charge against him of inciting violence for using a common religious term, jihad, "strange."

In their arguments, Rimawi's defence team,

Ahmad Najdawi, Jawad Younis and Marwan Alenai, told the court that the title of the article did not constitute a punishable crime, since "the term jihad religiously means fighting a holy war against unbelievers."

Qaisi said that after examining the term used, the court did not find anything in the article that would incite violence in the legal sense.

"The Arabic language is vast and has many terms, and the one used in Rimawi's article did not constitute a felony," he explained.

In his article, "Call for Jihad," published Aug. 3, Rimawi said the public was "disgusted with" and tired of hearing about the "peace culture" and normalisation with Israel.

Rimawi questioned the "culture of peace," asking if any of the peace promises had been achieved or if the "Jewish enemy" responded to Arab willingness to embrace peace.

Rimawi told the Jordan Times earlier that he did not mention Jordan or any other country in particular in his article and that he simply called for struggle by the "Arab masses" against all forms of Zionism.

Qaisi told the Jordan Times that the court has been more lenient in several cases concerning the press because the Press and Publications Department had expressed its willingness to drop charges.

"Once the plaintiff drops charges against the accused, punishment is minimised," he said.

Change to 'Palestinian cause' course at university sparks controversy

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh

AMMAN — A recent decision by the University of Jordan to "recategorise" a course offering on the "Palestinian cause" has stirred a campus controversy.

The university's Student Council sent a letter to University President Walid Ma'ani protesting what it called "the cancellation of the course," taken by around 700 freshmen each semester.

The course outlines the history of the Palestinian plight, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the role of Jordan as well as that of the Arab World in the 50-year old conflict. Similar courses

have also been offered periodically in high schools.

"By dropping this course, we are deleting part of history," said Student Council President Hareth Fakhri. "History should not be tampered with, it should be preserved in the minds of people."

While university officials denied that the recent change was linked to the peace process, Fakhri said the country should not modify its history for a "a peace treaty."

Issam Za'balawi, vice president for academic affairs, said the course was not dropped, only recategorised.

"The course is still there for

those who wish to take it," Za'balawi told the Jordan Times on Sunday.

He said the course, which formerly was an elective that could be used to fulfil undergraduate requirements, is now offered as a general elective course for interested students.

According to Za'balawi, under a plan introduced recently, students have to take two general elective courses. The "Palestinian cause" is one of the courses that can be used to satisfy that requirement.

"In this way, we are giving students the liberty to choose the courses that they desire," Za'balawi said.

Agreement on home for abused children

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordan River Design (JRD) and the Ministry of Social Development

Sunday reached an agreement on establishing a home called Dar Al Aman for abused children.

HRH Princess Rania, JRD president, who signed the agreement with Minister of Social Development Mohammad Khair Mamsar, said the home is one of the JRD's projects and is in line with the U.N. agreement on the rights of the child.

The safe home is designed to protect children that are exposed to mental and physical abuse or that are prone to danger, the Princess noted.

Noting that the Dar Al Aman project will be implemented in conjunction with the ministry, the Princess said the home will provide children with shelter, guidance and rehabilitation and will be operational by next year.

For his part, Mamsar said the project, believed to be

the first of its kind in the Arab region, is an example of close cooperation between the public sector and voluntary, private and non-governmental organisations in meeting community needs.

He said the ministry will provide the premises for the home and its infrastructure, including furniture, cover the rent and back the project's plans and programmes.

Noting that the ministry operates 21 institutions caring for underprivileged members of society, Mamsar said Dar Al Aman is a project of a different nature which gives shelter to abused children and rehabilitates them physically and mentally to help promote sound growth.

The JRD, which was established in 1995 as a non-profit, non-governmental organisation, cooperates with the Ministry of Social Development and offers programmes that help improve the living conditions of local communities.

Consumer society asks for new specifications for imported yoghurt

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — The National Society for Consumer Protection Sunday said it was lobbying the government to change the specifications for the imported "Jameed" dried yoghurt after it received complaints that some shipments were contaminated with dead worms and insects.

The society said a decision last year by the Ministry of Trade's Institute of Standards and Specifications to modify Jameed specifications required that the product should be free of microbes, animal waste, worms, cockroaches and parts of living or dead flies.

However, the institute made an exception by stating that any kilogramme of imported Jameed could have up to three full dead insects (ants and mosquitoes) or up to six parts of

these insects that "can be seen by the naked eye."

The 1986 specifications had banned the presence of any insects, regardless of quantity.

An NSCP official, who requested anonymity, said the vaguely-worded and elastic exception introduced last year allowed a number of importers to sell several kilogrammes of low-quality Jameed brought in from Syria and Iraq.

"We want the government to reconsider the specifications in order to require traders to import insect-free quantities of Jameed," he said.

Jameed, made from skimmed fermented goat milk, is dried in the open after manufacturers add salt and mould it into balls. It is diluted and cooked into a sauce to accompany the traditional mansaf dish, which is made of rice and lamb.

However, institute officials said the modifications introduced in 1997 were designed to ease the process of importing Jameed and were in line with international standards.

They also said a technical committee included traders, officials from the various concerned ministries and an NSCP representative.

"When specifications are changed, we consult with the importer, the consumer and the merchant, and their views are taken into consideration," said Hassan Saudi, director general of the institute.

He said the institute constantly introduces changes to existing specifications to match new trends in the food processing industry.

Salem Khewi, another official at the institute, said that when the department

changed the Jameed specifications, it took into consideration the manufacturing process.

"Yoghurt in general is processed manually and is dried in the open air, which exposes the product to insects," he said.

"But this does not mean that all imported Jameed has insects, because the Health Ministry and the institute test samples of Jameed before allowing it in," Khewi told the Jordan Times.

He also insisted that the "tolerable percentage of insects in Jameed are in line with international standards," but that if "some amounts of Jameed do not meet the specifications, this could be due to bad storage."

Khewi said that having small percentages of insects was not harmful according to the technical committee's decision.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Veteran journalist Daoud dies at 70

AMMAN (J.T.) — Veteran Jordanian journalist Mobammad Daoud, who died Saturday at the age of 70, was buried yesterday in his hometown of Bireh in the West Bank. Daoud, who was born in 1927 in Bireh, near Ramallah, served as a script writer at Jordan Radio in Amman and later worked for the Jordan News Agency, Petra, as a translator and journalist. He eventually became Petra's deputy director. Daoud subsequently worked as a translator, writer and correspondent for Jordanian daily newspapers. Daoud, a member of the Jordan Press Association, was a columnist for the Arabic daily Al Dustour and worked with the paper until his death.

Agreements for tourism development

AMMAN (Petra) — Two agreements were signed between the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and a Jordanian contracting company to develop and restructure tourism facilities in the Karak, Jerash, Wadi Rum and Petra areas. Minister of Tourism Akel Biltaji said the project will cost \$44 million and will be completed by the year 2002.

Media meeting opens today

AMMAN (Petra) — The Institute of Diplomacy today will open a three-day meeting in conjunction with the Media Jemstone Network and the MacBride Group on culture and communications in a global community. The event will look into ways and means of finding new formulas to balance the global media and the challenges of the 21st century. Four main topics will be discussed at the meeting: The Right to Communicate, Evaluation and Future Perspectives; Information Technology, Democracy and Development; The Right to Communicate, Impact on National Identity and Culture; and Governance Structures and Forms of Communication, Law and Ethics. Local and international media specialists and academics will participate in the seminar, which is sponsored by the Jordan Radio and Television Corporation, Royal Jordanian, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Al Dustour newspaper and other groups.

'Israeli embassy deals with new tour agencies'

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Israeli embassy in Amman is now dealing with 12 tour operators designated to handle visa applications from Jordanians travelling to the Palestinian territories and Israel, an Israeli diplomat said Sunday. The Israeli embassy had previously dealt with eight tour operators, but work with three of those agencies was halted due to reported financial "misconduct," said the diplomat. Seven new tour operators, in addition to the remaining five, are now working with the Israeli embassy. The diplomat also said a report in the Arabic daily Al Dustour claiming that only 5,000 out of 20,000 Jordanians visiting Israel annually return to the Kingdom was false. According to the Israeli Bureau of Statistics, as of the end of 1997, 5,500 Jordanians were in Israel illegally, he said. Jordanians have long complained of unnecessary delays in obtaining visas, long queues and mistreatment outside the consular section at the Israeli embassy.

At least six killed in Indonesian riots

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Hundreds of Muslim rioters set fire to a Protestant church and a gambling hall Sunday and hurled rocks at soldiers who fired warning shots and tear gas. At least six people were killed, some of them mutilated.

Mobs also ransacked a Roman Catholic church while a wedding ceremony was under way, smashing stained glass windows, chalices and a statue of the Virgin Mary and flinging pews and Bibles on to a bonfire.

A nearby Catholic girls' school was also trashed.

The ethnic and religious violence was the latest sign that the military is increasingly hard-pressed to keep order in Indonesia's sprawling capital of 11 million people. The nation of 202 million is also enduring the strain of economic hardship.

Last week, as many as 16 people were killed in clashes between anti-government students and police and soldiers during a government assembly on political reforms. That fighting triggered mob riots in several parts of Jakarta.

In the rioting Sunday,

crowds blocked fire trucks from reaching the burning Christian Church of Ketapang. A police helicopter hovered above thousands of people roaming the streets. Soldiers with helmets, sticks and shields eventually pushed them away.

Shops were shut in the area, less than a kilometre from the state palace of President B.J. Habibie.

The fighting in north Jakarta was sparked by resentment among local residents towards Christian civilian guards of a gambling hall who had come from the eastern Indonesian city of Ambon.

Residents said a group of Ambonese had attacked a mosque early Sunday.

"Islam is the power in this area," one man said. Ninety per cent of Indonesians are Muslim.

Two dozen worshippers attending a service at the Protestant church fled when mobs attacked. Firemen pumped water from polluted canals to fight the blaze, but the church was gutted.

Mobs threw rocks at an open-backed military truck carrying 20 Ambonese that raced away and boys poked sticks at the occupants



Indonesian soldiers in armoured vehicles patrol around Jakarta's Chinatown. At least six people were killed and several buildings torched and looted in the Indonesian capital as simmering ethnic and religious tensions exploded into bloody unrest. Troops fired warning shots into the air in fruitless attempts to disperse several mobs rampaging through various parts of Jakarta, but mainly in the Chinatown district (Reuters photo)

through the vehicle's protective wire netting. "Kill them," the rioters screamed.

Officials of the Indonesian Red Cross recovered five bodies of Ambonese who had been slashed with knives and broken bottles.

The killers of one man cut off one of his ears and brandished it.

Assailants paraded a sixth

body in a cart. It was not known where the victim was from.

At the nearby Sacred Heart Church, a wedding party fled a crowd that burst in, breaking altar ornaments and tearing up priests' robes.

Moh leaders tried to exercise some control over the crowds, urging them not to break into stores.

"We will punish the ones

who want to loot," one ring-leader shouted.

Six months ago, Indonesia's sprawling capital was convulsed by rioting that killed 1,200 people and led to the ouster of former President Suharto after 32 years of authoritarian rule.

Thousands of buildings and vehicles were damaged and looting was widespread.

The May rioting was trig-

gered in part by discontent over Indonesia's worst economic crisis in decades, which has sent prices soaring and stripped millions of people of their jobs.

Mobs at that time targeted the homes and shops of Indonesia's ethnic Chinese minority, which is resented because it dominates trade. There was no indication of anti-Chinese sentiment in Sunday's riot.

Storm lashes Bangladesh, thousands evacuated

DHAKA (R) — A severe storm coming from the Bay of Bengal reached Bangladesh's south coast near Mongla port Sunday and officials and Red Crescent volunteers said around 100,000 people had been evacuated.

"Many others have left on their own and taken refuge in the forests and on higher grounds," said one port official in Mongla.

The armed forces stood by for emergency rescue operations and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina appealed to Bangladeshis to pray that the country, still reeling from devastating floods between July to September, would escape another disaster.

Weather officials said the wind force had eased slightly but heavy rain was battering the coasts and areas further inland.

Rain was also falling in the capital Dhaka.

"The coast has been hit with an initial wind speed of 80 kph ... and there has been

a report of storm surge," said one official at Khulna, near Mongla.

"We have no details yet but the storm is already on our coast," he added.

All ships at Mongla and the country's main port of Chittagong, including navy vessels, and fishing boats at sea, were asked to move to safety. Cargo handling at the ports has been suspended.

The Bangladesh Air Force moved its planes out of Chittagong to other bases and a visiting South Korean naval vessel with more than 200 crew was asked to move to the outer anchorage to avoid collisions, port officials said.

Civil aviation officials said commercial flights to and from Chittagong and Cox's Bazar had been cancelled.

The Storm Warning Centre in its latest bulletin said maximum sustained wind speed around the storm centre came down to 115 kph from 140 kph. It said the storm could cross the Bangladesh coast by Sunday evening, sweeping

some areas with a tidal surge of up to 2.4 metres over normal tide.

Mongla port authorities have been asked to keep boats "Great Danger" signal number 10, but Chittagong port has been advised to lower the signal to six from nine, the bulletin said.

Sitting on the storm's eye was the Hiron Point naval base in the Bay of Bengal, 80 km from Mongla, weather officials said.

Floods earlier this year killed more than 1,500 people, left millions homeless and caused economic losses of \$4.3 billion.

A major storm swept the coasts near Mongla in 1988, killing more than 3,000 people and thousands of wild animals in the Sundarban forest.

Bangladesh's worst cyclone was in 1991 when some 138,000 people perished on the coast and in several Bay islands, mostly near Chittagong and Cox's Bazar.

Hindu nationalists rule out government's fall after polls

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's Hindu nationalists Sunday ruled out the fall of their eight-month-old government even if they lose crucial state elections this week.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) said a widely expected defeat in Wednesday's polls would have only a limited impact.

"It will have no bearing on the central government," BJP spokesman Krishan Lal Sharma told AFP. "It will not change the number of members of parliament supporting our government."

Analysts and some opinion polls have warned that the BJP could end up losing elections for local governments in New Delhi city and three Indian states to the main opposition Congress party.

Even a limited Congress victory in some of the elections is expected to trigger a

crisis for Vajpayee's coalition government.

The Congress, India's oldest party and the second largest group in parliament, is under pressure from other opposition parties to bid to seize power from the Hindu nationalists after Wednesday's polls.

The BJP's Sharma, however, admitted that the provincial elections were important both for the nationalists and Congress.

"The elections are quite important," he said. "Naturally we would like to retain the states (held by the BJP)."

"These are the first elections the BJP is fighting under the leadership of Vajpayee as prime minister. At the same time, it is a major test for (Congress president) Sonia Gandhi too."

"The result of these elections are naturally going to be crucial for both sides," Sharma said. "Sonia Gandhi is trying her best to improve

the Congress's position."

Among the places going to the polls the BJP rules New Delhi, city and the northern desert state of Rajasthan. The Congress rules Madhya Pradesh state and tiny Mizoram in the far east.

Most opinion polls have predicted a BJP defeat in New Delhi and Rajasthan but a possible BJP victory in Madhya Pradesh, India's largest state. The BJP is a minor player in Christian-dominated Mizoram.

Saturday, however, the India Today news magazine said the BJP could lose even in Madhya Pradesh — the only place it had been expected to win — and thus spark a possible fresh national election.

Opinion polls say the BJP's failure to provide a stable national government — its main plank during parliamentary polls earlier this year — and contain inflation has alienated the mass of voters.

NEWS IN BRIEF

CIA obtained full set of East German spy records

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. government obtained a complete set of secret spy records from East Germany in a move considered one of the greatest triumphs of cold war espionage shortly after the fall of that country's Communist government, The Washington Post reported. The files contained the names and other information about citizens of the United States, Britain and West Germany who worked for the foreign operations wing of the East German state security organisation known as the Stasi, the newspaper said in Sunday editions. Information from the files was used to convict two people — Theresa Marie Squillacote and Kurt Alan Stand — of espionage in Virginia earlier this month, according to court records. The Post quoted unidentified sources as saying the CIA obtained the files after high-ranking East German officials removed them from Stasi officers in Berlin and hid them sometime before the Berlin Wall fell. The German government earlier this month made its latest request that the United States return the files. German intelligence officials have reviewed the records at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, on several occasions, the Post said. The Post said U.S. government officials have unofficially confirmed that the CIA is holding the files. But an agency spokesman refused to acknowledge this, it said, and White House officials would not discuss the files. A CIA officer told the newspaper that details about the files remain secret because disclosure could endanger the lives of anyone who was involved in helping the agency obtain them.

Mugabe buys Russian arms for Congo war

HARARE (R) — A Zimbabwean newspaper reported Sunday that President Robert Mugabe's government had bought new military equipment from Russia to boost its war effort in Congo. "Zimbabwe has acquired new military hardware worth billions of dollars to help beef up its presence in the Democratic Republic of Congo," the independent Zimbabwe Standard said. Zimbabwe National Army officials were not available for comment. Mugabe has deployed 6,000 troops, backed by tanks and warplanes, in the former Zaire to help defend President Laurent Kabila against Tutsi-led rebels backed by Rwanda and Uganda. The war has also drawn in Angola, Namibia and Chad on Kabila's side. Other sources say Libya and Sudan are helping the Congolese president. The Standard quoted military sources as saying the arms, which include helicopter gunships, fighter and spotter planes were worth \$2 billion (\$54 million) and arrived in the country three weeks ago. "The untimely fall of Kindu and subsequent capture of Zimbabwean soldiers has shown our military authorities that unless new strategies and more sophisticated weapons were purchased for the eastern front, Zimbabwe and her allies could suffer enormous embarrassment from the rebels," it quoted a military source as saying. Latest efforts to end the war broke up abruptly Saturday after rebels demanded that the Kinshasa government be named as a perpetrator of genocide and that Sudan and Chad be named among the belligerents in the three-month-old war. A separate round of talks is scheduled to take place on Dec. 6 in the Zambian capital, Lusaka.

30,000 homeless following deadly China quakes

BEIJING (AP) — Some 30,000 people are living outside in cold winter conditions following a series of earthquakes in southwest China, officials said Sunday. Two earthquakes Thursday in the Ninglang Yi Autonomous County in Yunnan province and neighbouring Yanyuan County in Sichuan province killed three people and injured 1,543, at least 211 of them seriously, officials and state media said. The quakes of magnitude 5 and 6.2 caused 12,370 houses to collapse and damaged another 161,331. The Yunnan Civil Affairs Bureau said. The area was also hit by three other quakes of magnitude 5 or above in October. Following the latest quakes, some 30,000 people are living outside in snow, rain and nighttime temperatures as low as zero Celsius, the bureau said. "The situation is extremely serious," with winter clothes, food and medicine lacking, it said. Yunnan's Seismology Bureau said it could not rule out the possibility of another quake in the area, the state-run Xinhua News Agency said. It said 1,000 tents and 1,000 blankets were sent to the area but "are far from adequate." At an emergency meeting Sunday, Yunnan's provincial government ordered the collection of another 2,000 quilts, 3,000 blankets, construction material, disinfectants and medicine for quake-hit areas.

WHO calls for higher taxes, other measures against tobacco

BEIJING (AP) — Tobacco smoking is becoming one of the worst health disasters in history, and China is being badly hit, the director-general of the World Health Organisation said Sunday. Gro Harlem Brundtland said 3.5 million people worldwide will die from smoking this year. That figure is expected to triple to 10 million into the next century, with possibly around 2 million of the deaths in China, she said in a speech to Beijing's elite Qinghua University. "China's share of this tragedy may be huge," she said, according to a text of her speech. Tobacco is "one of the greatest emerging health disasters in human history," she added. Brundtland called for stronger tobacco taxes, curbs on tobacco smuggling and enforced bans on tobacco advertising. To succeed, the measures will need "firm political direction and strong public support," she added. China now logs the highest number of deaths from smoking of any country, having recently overtaken the United States. If current smoking patterns persist in China — where two-thirds of the men become smokers before the age of 25 — tobacco will kill about 100 million of the 300 million males now under 30, according to a new study published last week in the British Medical Journal.

8 die in hospital from expired saline

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Eight patients in a Bangladesh hospital died hours after being given intravenous saline that turned out to be old while 15 others developed high fever, newspapers reported Sunday. The incident caused panic at the Rangpur Medical College Saturday night and doctors immediately removed the saline bottles hooked on to patients who developed the fever, local newspapers reported, quoting officials. The government immediately ordered a probe into the deaths and the supply last month of some 4,000 bottles of saline solution that had expired in 1982. Details of the incident were sketchy.

Australian radio wedding man criticises bride over topless shots

SYDNEY (AFP) — A 24-year-old Australian man who married a stranger as part of a radio station publicity stunt lashed out at his estranged bride Sunday for posing in Playboy and courting the spotlight.

Glenn Emerton headed for a honeymoon in Paris with 22-year-old Leif Bunyan earlier this year, just hours after they met and married. The wedding quickly hit the rocks and the pair split earlier this month. But Bunyan has seized on her 15 minutes of fame and is set to appear in next month's Australian edition of Playboy, pictures from which were featured in tabloid newspapers Sunday. And that had Emerton expressing dismay.

"She is doing too much. I could have done it too but that's not me," he told the Sun-Herald newspaper. "It's stupid. It's over. If she wants to grab the limelight she can. I'm not like that."

Emerton, a marketing manager for a hardware chain, also denied Bunyan's claim that she had ended their relationship. "I can't believe it," he said. "How could she say

that? It's not true."

In a television interview to be broadcast Monday, Bunyan claims she ended the sham marriage. "I could not go along with the facade anymore," she told the Nine Network. "You cannot force yourself to like someone."

"There's no chance of us getting back together. He's a lovely guy, but he wasn't for me. There was so much pressure to succeed, but I couldn't keep up the facade. I couldn't lie to anyone or myself."

Bunyan, who was training to be a teacher when she married Emerton, said she had thought long and hard before posing topless for Playboy. As for her current fame, "It's great. I'll just go with the flow and see what happens. I wouldn't mind trying a few different things."

In the future, a possible career as a model or actress, according to her agent. "You can easily see her in (Australian soap opera) Home and Away," manager Steve Moriarty said. "There's already been one television show that's asked if she's available."

China to seek fuller apology from Japan over World War II

TOKYO (R) — Japanese views of its World War II past, an issue that has long harmed its image on the world stage, face new tests this week with a visit by Chinese President Jiang Zemin and a court ruling on compensation for thousands of prisoners of war.

The twin events loom as distractions for Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi as he prepares for a special session of parliament on Friday to pass urgently needed financial legislation to get Japan out of its worst ever recession.

In a sign of how the issue is occupying Japan's government, Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan will travel to Tokyo Tuesday, a day ahead of Jiang's arrival on the first visit to Japan by a Chinese head of state.

Authoritative sources said Tang's earlier than scheduled arrival was to negotiate with Japan a more comprehensive apology by Tokyo to China for its World War II actions.

The apology would be part of a joint statement on relations to be issued by the two leaders during Jiang's Nov. 25-30 visit.

Japan wants the apology to mirror one made by then-

Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama three years ago on the 50th anniversary of the war's end.

But China wants Japan to go further and specifically to mention harm done to China during the period from 1937 to 1945 when Japanese occupied most of the country.

"Japan, following a mistaken national policy... and through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations," Murayama said in his 1995 statement.

Murayama also expressed "feelings of deep remorse" and delivered a "heartfelt apology."

According to the sources, China maintains that Murayama's apology was weak — because of the Japanese word for apology that he used — and wants a stronger one.

China, which says Murayama's statement was directed to Asia as a whole, also wants Japan to specifically acknowledge the invasion by the Imperial Japanese Army and include an apology to the people of China.

"Japan has told China that the Japanese word for apology that Murayama used has little difference in meaning to the word for apology China wants Japan to incorporate in the joint statement," a senior Japanese Foreign Ministry official said.

In comments ahead of the visit, Tang has said Japan has never properly acknowledged its World War II atrocities.

"Japan has never completely abandoned its militarist past in the same way as Germany has with the Nazis," Tang said.

"If it were to do so, China and other Asian nations would not have to keep reminding Japan of history so often," he said last week in response to reporters' questions in Beijing about the visit.

Thursday, the day after Jiang arrives, seven representatives of former British, American, Australian and New Zealand prisoners of war gather in a Tokyo courtroom to hear a ruling on their long-running claim for compensation.

The seven plaintiffs represent 20,000 people who were either prisoners of war or

civilian internees. The claim was launched in 1995.

The prisoners are claiming \$22,000 each. A successful judgement would cost the Japanese government an estimated \$440 million.

Hundreds of thousands of Dutch, Korean and Chinese victims have also launched separate claims for compensation.

British POWs led protests by hundreds of people when Japan's Emperor Akihito paid a state visit to Britain in May. Many turned their backs when the emperor drove to Buckingham Palace alongside Queen Elizabeth.

Japan has repeatedly said that the issue of war compensation is closed because all claims were settled in 1951 by the San Francisco peace agreements.

Earlier this month Britain Arthur Titherton of the Japanese Labour Camp Survivors' Association (JLCSA) said the court case had been a long ordeal for survivors.

"I can only pray that the Japanese court will have accepted the justice of our case," he said.



United States President Bill Clinton shakes hands with U.S. soldiers after making a speech at Osan Air Force Base, Clinton told U.S. soldiers they must remain vigilant in the face of 'signs of danger' from North Korea as he toured U.S. bases in South Korea Sunday (Reuters photo)

Halt development of weapons of mass destruction, Clinton tells N. Korea

OSAN AIR BASE, South Korea (AFP) — U.S. President Bill Clinton demanded Sunday that North Korea halt efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction, warning that U.S. forces were on guard.

The toughly worded call came in a speech to troops and officers at the main U.S. Air Force Base in South Korea during a visit here dominated by fears about North Korean weapons proliferation.

Clinton urged North Korea to abide by a 1994 nuclear accord, which froze its nuclear programme and eased a potentially explosive crisis here, stressing the U.S.-South Korea military alliance was "stronger than ever."

The call came amid heightened fears over a suspect underground site in North Korea that Washington believes could be a nuclear installation and which Pyongyang has refused to open unconditionally.

In terms of weapons of mass destruction, "North Korea is also a major concern," he said in the speech to officers on the second full day of a visit here overshadowed by concerns over Pyongyang's nuclear and missile ambitions.

"It must comply with the obligations on nuclear non-proliferation," Clinton warned. "North Korea must maintain its freeze on, and must move ahead to dismantle, its nuclear weapons programme as it has agreed to do. It must comply with its obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty," he said.

"It must stop its efforts to develop and proliferate chemical and biological weapons and ballistic missiles," the U.S. president said in the strongest comments he has made on the issue since his arrival here Friday. North Korea and the United States signed the 1994 accord which froze the North's suspected nuclear

weapons programme in return for energy aid from Washington, Seoul and Tokyo.

But the latest furor over the underground site near Pyongyang's main declared nuclear site has raised concern over the viability of the deal and has drawn U.S. warnings it could be in danger unless suspicions are cleared.

"We will continue to pressure North Korea to take these steps for peace and security" and begin playing a constructive role. "We must remain ready and thanks to you, we will," he told the troops and officers.

Describing the U.S.-Seoul joint military commitment as "stronger than ever," he said "no one can doubt" their "commitment to freedom."

The visit to the air base — and two other key military installations, including a frontline base — aimed at underscoring the strength of the U.S.-South Korean military alliance against possible

aggression from the North.

"Our stability to succeed in promoting peace is uniquely (rooted) in the fact that we can back up our diplomatic efforts, when necessary, with military strength," he warned.

The comments to the U.S. soldiers were far more direct and aggressive than those Clinton made in a joint press conference after summit with President Kim Dae-jung Saturday. But he reasserted his support for Kim's policy of peacefully engaging the North in a bid to draw it out of its isolation. "America will continue to do what it takes to ensure the security of our citizens, our friends and allies and to be a friend of peace" in areas such as Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Kosovo and Korea.

New fears have been raised that a suspicious nuclear bunker in North Korea may be used for nuclear purposes.

Separated Korean families yearn for reunion with loved ones

CHANGJON, North Korea (AP) — Lee Kang-Ik, 70, laboriously climbed the peak of a North Korean mountain, knelt on the cold granite and prayed to be reunited with the wife and daughter he hasn't seen for nearly half a century.

"Lord, how long will you prolong this tragedy? Isn't 50 years of separation enough?" Lee cried as tears streamed down his wrinkled face. Overcome with emotion, he had to be helped down the slope by others.

Lee was one of about 800 tourists from South Korea on an unprecedented tour last week of Diamond Mountain, a wilderness of high crags, steep valleys and rushing streams on the North's east coast.

Most of the visitors were elderly North Korean natives who were separated from their families during the 1950-53 Korean war, a fate shared by 10 million people on both sides of the border.

No family reunions took place during the tour, a joint venture between Seoul's Hyundai group and North Korea. The five-day, four-night visit ended Sunday when the tourists' cruise ship returned to the South.

Lee and many other separated families used the visit to the mountain to hold memorial services for their deceased ancestors or pray for reunions with lost families.

Seven months after the Korean war broke out in 1950, Lee, then 22, fled to South Korea to evade being drafted into North Korea's

army. He left behind a 20-year-old wife and a 3-month-old daughter.

"I thought the war would end soon and we could be reunited," Lee said, heaving a sigh. "Who could have imagined that the separation would last 50 years — and, maybe, forever?"

Forty years later in 1991, Lee, through a friend in the United States, found that his wife and his daughter, 48, were still living at his native home in Haeju, a major city on the North's west coast.

Pretending that he resides in the United States, Lee has since exchanged about 50 letters with his wife and daughter. All of his letters were first sent to the United States where they were mailed to North Korea.

He has kept his residence in South Korea secret even to his family in the North, because he fears his whereabouts could endanger them. North Korea reportedly persecutes residents with immediate relatives in enemy South Korea.

Park Soon-Yong, 76, also a refugee from North Korea, learned during the tour that his mother died in a U.S. bombing raid in 1951, during the height of the war. He had last seen her a year before her death.

After the cruise ship arrived at Changjon port last Thursday, Park approached North Korean officials for information about his mother, who had a fish-processing business in the port in 1950, away from her family in Pyongyang, the capital.

Responding to his repeated appeals, North Koreans checked records and told him how his mother died.

Saturday, Park held a memorial service for her. He set up a makeshift altar on a rock on Diamond Mountain and made traditional deep bows in her memory.

"Mother, I've come to know today officially for the first time that you died 47 years ago. I've come too late. Sorry, mother," he recited in a prayer.

For Kim Taek-Ki, 70, the trip brought fresh agony. Kim had hoped to locate or hear about his parents and four brothers he has not seen since 1950. The tour was scheduled to pass through his native village, Onjung-Ri, at the foot of Diamond Mountain.

But the village of about 500 homes was gone. Several state retreat centres stand where the village used to be. Kim found that all 2,000 villagers were relocated to other areas 20 years ago.

Kim, a farmer living in eastern South Korea, became separated from his family when he fled to the South a few months after the war started and was drafted into the South Korean army.

His oldest brother, Kim Taek-Sung, was already serving in the North Korean army.

"I might have fought one of many battles against my brother during the war," Kim said. "What a tragedy. So many years have passed since the war ended. But the real war still continues, a war against agony."

Battle over peers in new U.K. parliament session

LONDON (R) — From Baron Abernethy to Baron Zouch of Haryngworth, Britain's hereditary peers will don their ermine-trimmed robes Tuesday to hear Queen Elizabeth pronounce their political death sentence.

Packed tightly on the red leather benches of the House of Lords, the elderly scions of Britain's aristocracy will assemble to learn their fate at the hands of Prime Minister Tony Blair's Labour government.

The highlight of the royal speech from the throne in the neo-Gothic splendour of the upper chamber will be a promise to take away the 759 hereditary peers' right to sit and vote in the Lords.

Labour's appetite for the change, promised ahead of its May 1997 general election victory, has been sharpened by a series of defeats inflicted on it in the Lords, where the Conservative opposition has a built-in majority.

Political sources say Blair has slimmed down his programme of legislation for the next year because of the likelihood of prolonged trench warfare with the Conservative peers.

Blair's 179-seat majority in the House of Commons has up to now ensured brisk progress for an ambitious programme of lawmaking.

Measures passed in the 18-month parliamentary session which has just ended included new devolved assemblies in Scotland and Wales, a minimum wage, the independence of the Bank of England and educational reforms.

In 1999, the political grid is likely to be tougher for Blair and his ministers as Britain's economy slows down. Labour still leads the Conservatives in the polls by a wide margin but is expected to lose seats in next year's European elections

and in voting for local government. Blair's slimmed-down legislative menu is likely to include bills on welfare reform, trade union rights and financial services, and a new form of government for London including a directly-elected mayor.

The government is also committed to a bill to lower the age of consent for homosexual sex from 18 to 16, another measure which will face resistance in the House of Lords.

But plans to introduce a Strategic Rail Authority, a Food Standards Agency and a law on freedom of information are all thought likely to be postponed for a year.

Blair, facing discontent in his party from leftwingers and grassroots activists who dislike his "New Labour" approach, may hit trouble over welfare reform if, as hinted, his plan tries to curb the rise in payments to the disabled.

He gives every sign of relishing the scrap ahead over the removal of hereditary peers, an issue on which he can rally support in his own party and paint the Conservatives as the party of privilege and reaction.

The London Times warned Conservative leader William Hague Friday that he risked repeating the same mistake his party made the last time a reforming government took on the House of Lords — in 1909-11.

On that occasion, the Conservative peers lost at the hands of the Liberals after they opposed a radical budget presented by David Lloyd George, one of Blair's political heroes.

"An aristocracy," Lloyd George declared to the House of Commons at the height of the constitutional battle, "is like cheese: the older it is, the higher it becomes."

"Objectively there is nothing wrong with providing military services to people who don't have them, in exactly the same way as you get hankers, doctors and construction workers in Third World countries."

"We're not a sort of moral-crusading white legion that goes around the world knocking off the bad guys," he said.

"But our commercial operations are tempered with trying to do it for the right people and not simply because someone comes along with a fat cheque."

However he did admit: "Our clients may not be democratically elected in terms we all understand in the West but they are supported."

Myanmar junta says opposition must drop parliament claim before talks

YANGON (AFP) — Myanmar's junta Sunday accused Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition of blocking dialogue with the government, effectively warning that detained activists were hostages to her demands for a meeting of parliament.

The fate of hundreds of National League for Democracy (NLD) members confined to government "guest houses" lay with NLD leaders, said top government spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Hla Min.

"The sooner the NLD decides to retract their intentions to holding this parliament, the sooner the rest of the people would be returned home," he said at a briefing attended by more than 30 foreign diplomats here.

NLD leaders called earlier this year for the convening of the parliament which arose out of its landslide victory in 1990 polls which the military government has refused to recognise.

"Future meetings between government and (National League for Democracy, NLD) leadership are dependent on the retraction by the NLD to have this parliament," Hla Min said.

"We had already started confidence-building talks before the call for the parliament." "This (call) more or less details the confidence-building talks," Pressed by diplomats, Hla

Min said, however, that even if the parliament demand was dropped, talks with the NLD would not immediately follow.

"Too many bad feelings have come out from the NLD's unilateral decision to call a parliament."

"Wounds have to be healed first, the retraction of this parliament has to be done before the dialogue process has to begin again," he said.

The NLD, which is due to hold its own briefing Monday, says it is always ready to talk with the government but officials refuse to sit down with Aung San Suu Kyi and want to meet lower-ranking NLD members.

The opposition's demand for a parliament prompted the junta's nationwide campaign against the NLD, which prompted hundreds of activists to leave the party after being set free.

According to government figures Sunday, 384 NLD members had been set free and 467 "still remain as guests of the government."

The NLD says 182 MPs are detained along with 701 other activists.

Junta officials said a further 15 NLD members could be set free Sunday.

Some 12 NLD offices have so far closed and 1,422 people resigned, they said.

Hla Min denied claims by the NLD and diplomats that coercion by military intelligence had prompted the res-

ignations. "No preconditions have been set on the release," he said.

The junta, known as the State Peace and Reconciliation Council (SPRC), says people have left because they are fed up with Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership. "After the discussions they came to the understanding that national security is more important than politics," said the spokesman.

He said all activists were being treated well with free medical care and some had been allowed home at weekends.

"The government has no wish to detain them for any longer than necessary," Diplomats in Yangon have told AFP that the junta is trying to systematically crush the NLD, aiming to turn it into an "empty shell" unable to challenge for power.

The government argues the time is not yet right for elections it has promised to hold after the drafting of a constitution.

The NLD has boycotted the drafting process, claiming generals are trying to maintain their grip on power by rigging the electoral system.

In his briefing, Hla Min also said he expected that universities, closed since 1996 amid indications they were hotbeds of revolt, would reopen soon, perhaps before the end of the year.

Mercenaries should be regulated, says leading proponent

LONDON (R) — Mercenaries should be regulated by the government or the United Nations to restore confidence in them, one of their leading proponents said in an interview published Sunday.

The call was made by former British army Colonel Tim Spicer, who is at the centre of a British parliamentary probe into arms supplies to Africa.

Spicer, boss of the military consulting firm Sandline International, called for an office of mercenary regulation which would vet personnel, approve operations and send observer teams.

"Regulation would help people to have a perception of what we

really do and dispel the idea that we are on-the-rampage, out-of-control, gun-slinging undesirables," he told The Sunday Telegraph.

But he stressed that regulation would have to be speedy and secret in order not to damage the effectiveness of mercenaries.

Spicer was investigated by British Customs officers this year and the government was forced to order a report into whether officials had violated British law, which banned the supply of arms to Sierra Leone.

Spicer's firm was hired by President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, ousted in a coup in May 1997, to help him return to power.

He told a parliament-

tary committee earlier this month that he held several meetings with British officials in December 1997 and January 1998 to brief them on his plan.

He said he assumed that Britain's official policy of restoring Kabbah to power by peaceful means had been changed in the light of events, notably the atrocities committed by the junta which ousted him.

Kabbah was returned to power by Nigerian-led forces in February.

Spicer said in his interview that Sandline did not work with terrorists, drugs or nuclear, biological and chemical weapons or embargoed governments like Iraq and Libya.

But he insisted:

"Objectively there is nothing wrong with providing military services to people who don't have them, in exactly the same way as you get hankers, doctors and construction workers in Third World countries."

"We're not a sort of moral-crusading white legion that goes around the world knocking off the bad guys," he said.

"But our commercial operations are tempered with trying to do it for the right people and not simply because someone comes along with a fat cheque."

However he did admit: "Our clients may not be democratically elected in terms we all understand in the West but they are supported."

Anti-U.S. fervour grows ahead of Anwar's trial

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Anti-U.S. sentiment gained pace in Malaysia Sunday after the detention of four supporters of ousted Deputy Premier Anwar Ibrahim, whose corruption trial resumes here next week.

In northern Perlis state, hundreds of people burnt an effigy of U.S. Vice President Al Gore and carried banners condemning him at a one-hour gathering Sunday, the official news agency Bernama reported.

The government, meanwhile, plans to launch a nationwide campaign next week which it says will allow people to vent their frustrations over alleged foreign meddling.

"The purpose is to get a true picture of the feelings of the 20 million Malaysians about problems facing the country," Information Minister Mohammad Rahmat was quoted as saying in the Sunday Star.

But opposition leader Lim Kit Siang warned of a government crackdown on dissent following the Saturday arrest of Tiam Chua, who heads an opposition coalition.

Chua was among four people detained after police used water

cannons loaded with yellow dye to disperse up to 200 protesters at a Muslim neighbourhood here late Saturday.

Lim said Chua's arrest may "mark a massive crackdown against dissent in Malaysia, ushering in a new dark age for democracy in the country" and called for his immediate and unconditional release.

Human rights group Voice of the Malaysian People (Suaram), charged that Chua was "singled out and arbitrarily arrested."

Suaram coordinator Elizabeth Wong voiced concern that Chua and the other detainees would only be brought to court Monday and warned this might constitute an "illegal detention" as "anyone arrested must be brought to a magistrate within 24 hours."

"No one, especially the police, is above the law," she said in a statement.

Since Anwar's sacking and arrest on 10 charges of corruption and sodomy in September, his supporters have mounted weekly demonstrations calling on Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad to end his 17-year rule.

The protesters received a boost from Gore, who on a visit here last week praised "brave" Malaysians calling for reforms. Malaysia has warned Washington will be made accountable for any "rupture" in its multiracial harmony.

However, Gore's remarks have instead sparked a wave of patriotic fervour, with Kuala Lumpur awash with national flags and indignant politicians and newspapers continuing their anti-U.S. tirade.

The leading Malay newspaper Utusan Minguian in its Sunday editorial said it would not be surprising if the United States wanted to topple Mahathir.

"To America, Mahathir is a difficult leader to deal with because he is not stupid and not a follower," it said.

It warned Malaysians against what it said were efforts by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to break up the country.

"According to a report in Jakarta, the troubles in Indonesia and Malaysia are the work of big political powers carried out by the CIA through its agents," it said.

"CIA is everywhere. Their job becomes easy when the local people are prepared to become agents or allowed themselves to be used," it said.

The New Sunday Times slammed the U.S. vice president, saying only a "mentally incapacitated person of Gore's stature would suggest that street violence is the legitimate way of bringing down a democratically-elected government."

"If he thinks he can interfere with impunity in the affairs of a sovereign nation and there are people in this country who are willing to accept his handouts, he should use his influence, his power and his money to assist them at the polls."

"Yes, our democracy is not perfect but the American democracy is even less perfect," it said. Malaysia is due to hold its general elections by mid-2000.

Anwar, who has been refused bail, is now on trial for four of the corruption charges. The trial was halted during last week's Asia-Pacific summit in Kuala Lumpur and is set to resume Monday. Dates for his trial on the other six charges will be set in June.

Searching for biblical Luhith in the Wadi 'Isal area

(Note: This is the second of two articles on archaeological investigations in and around the Wadi 'Isal, along the south-east coast of the Dead Sea.)

ONE OF the great but often inconclusive pleasures of Jordan's antiquities is the attempt to identify known archaeological sites with places mentioned in ancient texts, such as the Bible, Egyptian and Assyrian texts, individual inscriptions, or the writings of Christian and Muslim pilgrims during the past two millennia. One such project that is particularly fascinating has been the attempt to identify the site called Luhith in several biblical passages, and also known from Nabataean, Roman, and Byzantine era texts.

In 1979, the German scholar Dr. Siegfried Mittmann made a six-day reconnaissance survey of Wadi 'Isal in an attempt to identify antiquities sites that could help determine whether Wadi 'Isal was the "Ascent of Luhith" of the books of the Prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, a place also mentioned by the church historian Eusebius in the early 4th Century AD as "Leutha." To determine the location of the Ascent of Luhith, however, one had first to figure out where Luhith itself was located.

Scholars have long seen Luhith as a town in Moab, located somewhere on the western slopes of the Moabite plateau, perhaps between Rabbah and Zoar. The two places where it is mentioned in the Bible (Isaiah 15:5 and

Jeremiah 48:5) are in the context of God's prophecies about the destruction of Moab, when fleeing refugees will cry as they walk on "the ascent of Luhith" or "up the way to Luhith." The text suggests that the refugees walked up from the valley to the plateau, as Mittmann believes, though other scholars think it refers to a flight of refugees from the Moabite plateau towards the valley.

Isaiah 15 says: "My heart cries out over Moab; her fugitives flee as far as Zoar, as far as Eglath-shelishiyah. They go up the way to Luhith, weeping as they go; on the road to Horonaim they lament their destruction."

The passage in Jeremiah reads: "...Moab will be broken; her little ones will cry out. They go up the way to Luhith, weeping bitterly as they go; on the road down, to Horonaim anguished cries over the destruction are heard." The biblical references to the "ascent of Luhith" suggested to Mittmann and other scholars that "Luhith must have been a town located on the slopes of the Trans-Jordanian mountains or on a route ascending from the Dead Sea to the Moabite plateau, namely from the area around Seil en-Numeira (Wadi Numeira)," Mittmann has written.

Nabataean evidence

More evidence came from a 2nd Nabataean tomb inscription that was found in Madaba earlier this century, and dated to the 46th year of the reign

of the Nabataean King Aretas IV, which would be 37 AD. It refers to two men, a grandfather and grandson both called 'Ytybl. The younger 'Ytybl was identified as "the commander of the military camp located in/by Luhithu and Abarta."

He served at the camp at Luhith, but lived in Madaba, which is why the tomb and inscription were found there. Mittmann concluded from this information that "a permanent Nabataean military camp was located at or near Luhith, for the purpose of protecting an obviously strategic road that was called the 'ascent of Luhith' in the Bible."

Eusebius wrote in the 4th Century AD: "...between Areopolis and Zoara, there is a village which is now called Lueitha."

Areopolis is modern Rabbah, and Zoara (the former biblical Zoar) is modern Safi. Mittmann believes that the mention of Lueitha in relation to these two towns means that Lueitha was located on a Roman road linking the towns. He believes this was the same road indicated on the Late Roman road map known as the Tabula Peutingeriana (Peutinger Table), linking Rabbah with the site of Thamara in the north-west Wadi 'Araba (south-west of the Dead Sea). The Peutinger Table is a Medieval map probably based on a copy of a 2nd Century AD Roman era listing of cities by the writer Ptolemy. More hints about the location of Luhith came from a 2nd Century AD Hebrew

contract from the Bar Kochba collection, about the distribution of lands leased by men from the region of 'Ain Gedi, west of the Dead Sea. The document mentioned that two of these men were originally "from ha-Luhith...which (lies) by Mahoz-Agalain," referred to as a village in the district of Zoar, or modern Safi. The name Mahoz, or "port," reflects the area where the settlement of 'Agaltain was located — probably, Mittmann says, in the north bay of the Lisan Peninsula, along the south-east coast of the Dead Sea.

Wadi 'Isal road

He concludes that the well-documented and well-preserved Roman road in Wadi 'Isal is the same one referred to by Eusebius, which is also mentioned in the Peutinger Table. After he walked the Wadi 'Isal area and examined all possible sites that could be associated with Luhith, Mittmann concluded that the Iron Age remnants of biblical Luhith are to be found at the modern village of Kathra, at the east end of Wadi 'Isal, nine kilometres south-west of Karak.

The site also fits the criteria of the Madaba Nabataean inscription, for a Nabataean military camp existed west of Kathra, on the other side of a small gorge, at the hilltop site known today as Tell el-Medan. There is an Iron Age fort at the south end of the summit of the hill, and an 80 x 50 metre Nabataean fort at the north end,

almost certainly the "military camp by Luhithu" mentioned in the 1st Century AD Madaba Nabataean tombstone.

Some other scholars also believe that Luhith may be the same site as ancient Eglaim (or Eglajim), which is mentioned in Isaiah 15:8 as a town in Moab. It was known as Agallim, Agalain and Eglaim Agalla in the Hellenistic era, and Agalleim in the Roman period. Its precise location is not known, but is widely assumed to have been located south-west of Karak. The modern agricultural village of Mazra'a in this area, along the eastern Dead Sea coast, is sometimes suggested as a plausible candidate for Eglaim.

Horonaim?

The biblical passages above also mention the road to Horonaim (or Horonajim), which was a sanctuary town of Moab located near Zoar (modern Safi). Horonaim was also listed in the mid-9th Century BC inscription of King Mesha of Moab. The biblical references to Horonaim are in the context of fugitives fleeing Moab, who would "raise a cry of destruction on the road to Horonaim" (Isaiah 15:5), and who would raise a great cry for the destruction and desolation of Moab (Jeremiah 48:3,5,34).

The Mesha Inscription says: "...the house [of...] vid dwelt in Horonaim [...] and Chemosh said to me: 'Go down! Fight against Horonaim.' And I

By Rami G. Khouri

went down, and I fought against the town, and I took it; and Chemosh [restored] it in my days."

These passages have been translated in various biblical versions as "the road to Horonaim," "the descent of Horonaim," "the way of Horonaim," and "the road down to Horonaim" — all of which presumably refer to the established ancient road from the area of the Lisan Peninsula and Zoar to Horonaim, Karak and the Moabite Plateau.

The location of Horonaim is unknown, but many scholars place it north of Wadi Nimrin, in the Southern Ghors along the south-east Dead Sea foothills or coastal plain. One candidate for Horonaim is the site of ed-Deir, south-west of Rabbah. Scholars who believe Horonaim was located further to the north-east, on the Moabite plateau, suggest possible candidates for its location as Tell Meidan, el-'Iraq, Al, and Khirbet Dhabab.

Economy, trade to top agenda in talks today

(Continued from page 1)

Jordan will be seeking an improved transport arrangement to move goods into the Palestinian territories, said an official at the Ministry of Industry and Trade. The Kingdom currently exports products via a back-to-back system, which requires that goods are loaded, unloaded and reloaded several times before reaching their final destination. Jordan complains that the system is time consuming, expensive and, in some cases, damages the goods.

The official said Jordan would like to see a point-to-point system, where Jordanian lorries would travel directly to a designated area in either the self-rule areas of the Gaza Strip or Jericho to be retrieved by Palestinian trucks.

To reduce the cost and duration of standards and specifications testing on the Israeli sides, Amman and Tel Aviv agreed last March to allow the Royal Scientific Society to test 12 commodities. According to the official, Jordan is seeking to expand this list.

Additionally, the controversial Qualified Industrial Zone in Irbid — an industrial zone that promises duty and quota free access to U.S. markets if products meet criteria laid out by the United States — will be tabled. Currently, Jordan and Israel are haggling over the amount of Israeli content input that should be required before access is secured.

According to the original agreement initiated at the Doha economic conference last November, Jordan and Israel are each required to contribute 11.7 per cent of the total content. Talks held in August stipulated that the contribution would be lowered to eight per cent in response to Jordanian

concerns that the cost of production would be driven too high if industrialists were to include an 11.7 per cent Israeli input.

But Jordan and Israel cannot come to agreement over the duration of the reduction to eight per cent. Jordan currently prefers that the reduction becomes a permanent condition, while Israel argues that it should be for one or two years at most.

Today's talks are a continuation of a quadrilateral "meeting" between Jordan, the PNA, Israel and the U.S., hosted last week in Jerusalem during a visit to the region by U.S. Secretary of Commerce William Daley.

Daley was in the region to identify U.S. business opportunities and to bolster regional economic cooperation in wake of the Wye River Plantation accord signed Oct. 23 between Israel and the PNA. The commerce secretary said that Jordan's opportunities in the West Bank "should be greater than they are."

He also said he believed the U.S. could "take steps" to remove obstacles that conflict with the free flow of goods and workers in the region.

An Israeli embassy official told the Jordan Times that "both Sharon and Shamirsky have made a decision to cut all the red tape blocking Jordanian trade," in line with Jordanian complaints that Tel Aviv is to blame for the low level of trade between Jordan and both the PNA and Israel.

But Jordanian officials expect that the outcome of today's discussions will be contingent on trade talks between the PNA and Israel, which began last week and are expected to conclude in five weeks time.

PNA: Israeli refusal to free prisoners an 'insult'

(Continued from page 1)

Justice Minister Tsahi Hanegbi told the radio that Israel will "certainly not release members of Hamas, or murderers of women, children and innocent civilians."

Netanyahu on Saturday rejected out of hand Palestinian calls for the release of more political prisoners and warned that Israel's position would not change. "We wouldn't free baby-killers and bomb-planters for anything in the world, especially shortly after they've committed their crimes," Netanyahu said.

"I advise the Palestinians not to hold any illusions on the matter," he said, adding that the Jewish state would not

release any prisoners "implicated in murders" or "belonging to Islamist groups."

Israel "never undertook at Wye Plantation to free prisoners with Jewish blood on their hands or belonging to Islamist groups," Netanyahu's office insisted in a statement.

Sources in the Israeli army told AFP that such a formulation excluded virtually all Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails.

Israeli television reported that the army had proposed releasing non-Islamist prisoners even if they had "Jewish blood on their hands" but that Netanyahu had rejected the proposal. Around 3,000 Palestinian prisoners remain in Israeli jails.

Jordan, Syria to establish early warning system to monitor Yarmouk River water

(Continued from page 1)

Mabasneh and Hadid, due to address a joint press conference on Monday,

are expected to provide more details on how Damascus planned to deal with 30 ditches and pumping facilities to store river water inside Syria — a main concern for Amman.

Jordanian officials claim these ditches have helped reduce the flow of the

Yarmouk River from 470 million mcm a year to 270 mcm in the Adassiyeh border area.

On Saturday, Water and Energy Minister Hani Mulki said the dam project would be feasible if such construction works stop.

The dam is expected to take three and half years to be built, according to the officials.

Israel agreed to give the Kingdom over 200 mcm

of water annually, mostly from the Yarmouk River, under the 1994 peace treaty.

Last month, Jordan and Israel began the construction of a JD1.65 million diversion wall to utilise 40 mcm of the river's overflow per year and regulate a year-round inflow of water to the King Abdullah Canal. The government said constructing this project would not negate

the partnership with Syria regarding the planned dam.

The country's population, increasing by 3.5 per cent annually, will need 1.2 billion cubic metres of water per year between 1998 and 2000. But the Kingdom's current water resources "only amount" to 960 mcm a year, according to official Jordanian figures.

Four committees to examine IPC deal

(Continued from page 1)

Mulki also told the Jordan Times that all pipelines were stored at the Aqaba Region Authority pending the completion of investigations into the legality of the bid.

The minister showed willingness to go through all studies conducted to determine the feasibility of using the IPC pipelines in oil and water projects.

"We'll go through all the studies that were made in the early 1990s for the possible use of the pipelines, and also the current condition of the pipelines that were used in the early 1950s and 1960s in water projects," Mulki added.

He added that about 13 kilometres of pipelines that were used in water projects are now worn out and no longer fit for use.

However, officials said most of the main pipes were removed during the 1950s and 1960s for use in several projects to secure domestic water supplies, leaving other sections of the underground pipeline to decay.

The government also decided to investigate all hiding procedures that took place last July, in order to make sure of all legalities. However, a government official said that a special committee was formed to supervise the sale, and

advertisement to tender the sale was placed in three local dailies, and the bid was won by the highest of the three bidders.

The Iraqi Petroleum Company issue will be discussed tomorrow by the Lower House Energy and Agriculture Committee, to be attended by Mulki.

"I'll meet the committee on Tuesday to update them on the recent results that the field technical committees would have collected up to that date," Mulki said.

"After we conclude our investigations, we'll keep the Parliament posted, in order to come out together with joint state concept of the Iraqi Petroleum Compa-

ny case," he added.

Mulki expected the completion of investigation of the pipelines case by next week.

The pipeline, linking Iraq's northern Kirkuk oil refinery with one on the Mediterranean city of Haifa via Jordan, was totally shut down after the 1948 war that led to Israel's creation.

It was initially built by a British company in the early 1930s for the Iraqi Petroleum Company.

In a minor Jordanian-Iraqi border demarcation in the early 1980s, Amman was eventually given additional parts of the pipeline which passed through the new areas.

A frustrating peace: Jordan-Israel ties five years on

(Continued from page 1)

Jordan and Israel concluded 15 agreements, originally designed as confidence-building measures in what has been conventionally referred to as "soft security," as one analyst described the accords.

In the past few years successive governments have forged ahead with the normalisation process with Israel, signing numerous agreements on trade, water, transport and agriculture, but few projects have actually left the drawing board.

Although there are no official statistics available, the general population, half of which is of Palestinian origin, has been reluctant to follow the government's lead, at least openly, and do business with the country's western neighbour. Analysts cite ideological resistance, as well as the stigma attached to dealing with what many still see as the "occupation force," as reasons for the reluctance.

Israel's Ambassador to Jordan Oded Eran, preferring to look at the glass as "half full" rather than "half empty," disagrees.

"There are hundreds of businessmen from both sides doing business; they may be small in volume, but they do exist," he told the Jordan Times in an interview, adding that there are Israeli agricultural experts coming to Jordan on a daily basis doing business and sharing their expertise.

In addition to regaining land and water, the government sold the peace treaty as a gateway to regional economic prosperity that would translate into improved standards of living at home.

Under the treaty, Jordan would receive 150 million cubic metres (mcm) of water annually. Thus far, Israel has been providing Jordan with 60 mcm per year of water from Lake Tiberias. Money for costly desalination and wastewater treatment plants, which Israel says has to be shared by both countries, is not yet available.

To highlight the importance of water, Jordan and Israel marked four years of peace on Oct. 26, by starting much-delayed work on a JD2 million project to divert scarce water from the Yarmouk River flowing along their

frontier, which Jordan expects will supply the country with an extra 20 mcm a year, increasing the Kingdom's share of Yarmouk's waters to 160 mcm.

But, the Kingdom still sees a storage system project on the Jordan River as the long-term solution for its water dilemma, which has emerged as one of the most serious political and social issues facing any government. And with the winter rains still not here, the forecast for next summer looks politically stormy, politicians fear.

On the trade front, both sides recite a litany of woes. While admitting more could be done in their own backyard, each blames the other for the negligible trade volume.

"How can you develop trade when the presidents of the [industry and commerce] chambers are against cooperation," said Eran, frustrated. "There hasn't been one trade delegation to Israel to explore the potential."

In 1997 Jordan exported to Israel JD17.6 million worth of goods, while it imported JD9.7 million. In the first nine months of 1998, trade

volume exceeded JD 28 million, a marked increase in the balance of trade compared to the same period last year.

But according to Eran, Jordan should exert more efforts to market its products and tourism potential. Some Jordanian officials admit there is truth to Israeli criticisms, but insist that the Jewish state's policies must be changed.

"We do not market ourselves effectively, but Israelis have placed non-tariff barriers, standards and specifications and security-related concerns, which make it very difficult for us to export," said an official.

Israel is pressing for a free trade area agreement, while Jordan insists these barriers are the main obstacles to more trade, not only with Israel but with the West Bank which is subject to the same trade regulations imposed by their customs union, except for the lists of goods agreed upon by the Palestinians and Israelis in the Paris Economic Protocol.

But officials said the acid test of Israel's intentions would be the results of the meetings of the Palestinian-Israeli joint economic com-

(Continued from page 1)

mittee currently taking place. The outcome of these discussions will determine whether 88 items submitted by Jordan for import to the Palestinian areas would be added to the A1 and A2 lists.

With heavy U.S. involvement, a Qualified Industrial Zone was established in the north of Jordan to foster economic cooperation between Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian territories to underpin the peace process by allowing companies access to U.S. markets duty and quota free.

The joint pilot project to use Aqaba airport which began in November 1997 continues to witness only three flights a week, with Israel still resisting the operation of any mixed passenger charter flights.

As for the original project of building a new airport, there are still wide differences on the definition of a "joint airport" and the management of the airport.

On the development of the Jordan Rift Valley, Jordan and Israel simply do not share the same philosophy. Jordan sees the mega-development scheme as an integrated plan that revolves

around the Red-Dead Sea canal, while Israel views it in terms of separate projects that will eventually lead to an integrated plan, including sheep farming, a railway, and a joint tourism school.

Shortly after Jordan signed its historic peace treaty with Israel, an official Jordanian report predicted that on the economic front, peace would "stimulate economic growth as a result of the flow of investments capital to Jordan; alleviation of unemployment; forgiveness of Jordan's entire public debt to the United States; and the reduction of the rest of the foreign debt to manageable levels; development of the Jordan Valley by engaging in cooperative ventures, joint projects; establishment of Jordan as a commercial gateway to the Arab World; and the absorption of technological advances, modernisation of the administrative system and decentralisation."

Four years on, to the disappointment of many Jordanians, these predictions seem now more like wishful thinking than realistic aspirations,

By Rami G. Khouri

Syria needs \$6b to modernise industry

DAMASCUS (R) — Syria needs about 284 billion Syrian pounds (\$6.16 billion) to upgrade its industries in preparation for the signing of an association deal with the European Union (EU) currently under discussion, Industry Minister Ahmad Nezamuddin has said.

He told Reuters in an interview the required rehabilitation programme covered both the private and public sectors.

"The programme includes the development of infrastructure, especially industrial zones and related services," Nezamuddin said.

Syria and the EU began official negotiations earlier this year on the signing of an association deal within

the framework of the European-Mediterranean partnership.

Two meetings have been held so far in Brussels and Damascus, with a third scheduled for Brussels early next year.

The EU has pledged billions of dollars in aid to Mediterranean countries in accordance with the so-called association agreements with each of the Mediterranean states.

These agreements call for the creation of free trade zones and closer cooperation in all fields including the economic, political, cultural and scientific sectors.

Industrial sources say the agreement which would open Syrian and European markets to each other's pro-

ducers would mean the Syrian side would be faced with tough European competition.

So big efforts would be required to rehabilitate Syrian industry to make it competitive, the sources said.

Nezamuddin said the rehabilitation programme proposed by his ministry covered the development of human resources, companies and factories and the creation of a healthy environment for industry.

He said the European side had expressed readiness to provide assistance in the establishment of industrial cities and zones and the development of human resources.

But he stressed that figures on the estimated cost

of the rehabilitation programme were initial and that more discussion and analysis were needed to reach an accurate cost.

He said the European side had made no financial commitments during the talks.

Nezamuddin said the rehabilitation programme showed that Syria needed 25.24 billion Syrian pounds (\$548 million) to improve and develop human resources including vocational training, transfer of know-how, improvement of marketing and adoption of quality control programmes.

Financial investment needed for companies and factories was around 72.31 billion Syrian pounds (\$1.57 billion). This cov-

ered the acquisition of modern production tools, test equipment and data services, the minister said.

He said upgrading industrial infrastructure would cost around 186.15 billion Syrian pounds (\$4.04 billion).

This included the development and modernisation of the existing industrial centres, institutions and other bodies, and the establishment of three industrial zones.

The cost also covered the improvement of the services sector including transportation, communications and electricity in addition to the rehabilitation of the existing free trade zone, the minister said.

Bank of Israel official sees gains from weaker shekel

TEL AVIV (R) — The sharp depreciation of the shekel in October could give a boost to the flagging Israeli economy if it is followed up by the right fiscal and monetary policies, a top Bank of Israel official said Sunday.

Leo Lederman, who heads the central bank's research division, said that if the depreciation did not spark long-term inflation the economy would benefit from the shekel's near 10 per cent drop against the dollar last month.

"In current conditions the real depreciation can contribute greatly to economic recovery and is also consistent strategically with economic growth," he said.

expansion, Lederman was quoted as saying in a Bank of Israel statement.

He said the depreciation could benefit both Israel's high technology sector and its more traditional export industries.

But Lederman warned that a real depreciation — one that did not set off long-term inflation — that erased the benefits of a weaker shekel — could only be achieved if Israel held to its restrictive fiscal and monetary policies.

His remarks come a day before the central bank announces its December monetary programme, including interest rates. The central bank has boosted its base rate a total of 4.0 percentage points since the end of October in a bid to stabilise the shekel and curb inflation.

Economists said Sunday that the bank would probably hold the base rate for December at its current annual rate of 13.5 per cent.

Lederman said he did not see any reason for the government to raise its inflation goal next year from the 4.0 per cent level now targeted.

"Adjusting the rate higher will signal the rapid acceptance by policymakers of higher inflation...which would undermine confidence in (Israel's) macro-economic policies in the eyes of local and foreign investors," Lederman said.

He said the 22 per cent rise in infrastructure spending planned by the government for next year was insufficient to make up for years of under-investment.

Meanwhile, the head of Israel's central bank, Jacob Frenkel, is coming under heavy fire from old allies in the government and finan-

cial markets for his handling of the shekel's slide and resulting inflation in the last seven weeks.

"I don't think we needed to have three per cent inflation and a 22 per cent depreciation. He should have taken drastic steps earlier on," said Micha Goldberg, head of research at Nessuah Zannex Securities.

The Bank of Israel governor was widely criticised for refusing to intervene directly in the foreign exchange market in early October, when the shekel tumbled against the dollar.

After recovering some of its losses, it is down nearly 19 per cent against the U.S. currency this year.

Now he is being attacked for raising interest rates excessively. In less than three weeks, the Bank of Israel has raised the base monetary tender rate by four percentage points to an annual 13.5 per cent in response to surging inflation.

October's consumer price index (CPI) jumped 3.0 per cent on the back of the shekel depreciation, the highest monthly index in more than seven years. But most economists say inflation will retreat to its pre-depreciation levels very quickly.

Frenkel's stubborn drive

to bring down Israeli inflation to Western levels long ago earned him the disapproval of many business leaders and legislators. They blame the central bank's tight monetary policy for the slowing economy and rising joblessness.

Last week, the head of the leading business lobby, the Manufacturers Association, called for the state comptroller to investigate monetary policy. In parliament, legislators said they were reviving efforts to create a board to oversee the central bank.

Those critics have been joined by some of Frenkel's old supporters. Finance Minister Ya'acov Neeman said for the first time he has differences of opinion with Frenkel, although he refused to detail them.

Newspaper reports have said Neeman viewed Frenkel's last boost in interest rates — a two percentage point hike — as wrong, as was the bank's refusal to intervene in the foreign exchange market.

Neeman is expected to come back to the cabinet this week with plans to raise the government's inflation target for next year, a move Frenkel has opposed.

Ministers are seeking to

boost the target, on the basis of which the Bank of Israel sets interest rates, to a range of four to six per cent. The target is now at four per cent.

"I think the party responsible for monetary policy must do some soul-searching with regard to the policy it is implementing," Treasury Director-General Ben-Zion Zuberfarb told reporters.

Market economists have also been mainly critical of the central bank.

Victor Shohet, chief economist at Ofek Securities, said Frenkel's original sin was cutting rates 1.5 points last August, a move that contributed to the shekel's first losses.

When the currency began plunging in October, he acted too cautiously and then moved precipitously with two unscheduled rate hike announcements.

"He should have acted earlier (during the depreciation), but he tried to convey business as usual. Then he panicked," said Shohet, who said he nevertheless thought Frenkel had no choice but to jack up rates sharply.

Ed Butchart, an economist for Merrill Lynch in London, said the central bank had erred in not selling dollars to moderate the shekel's losses in October, thereby causing dollar-denominated housing prices to soar and raising inflation.

"I find it a little bit difficult to understand when you have a CPI so influenced by housing prices, to try to get inflation down without managing the exchange rate," he said.

Exchange Rates		Sunday, 22-11-98		ACCESS 444444	
CURRENCY	UNIT	1 UNIT =	1 UNIT =	1 UNIT =	1 UNIT =
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1857	0.1927	1.8779	1.8390
SAUDI RIAL	5.2980	1.0000	1.0212	9.5481	9.7429
U.A.E. DIRHAM	5.1811	0.9793	1.0000	9.7427	9.5408
BAHRAIN DINAR	0.5325	0.1005	0.1025	1.0000	0.9793
QATAR RIAL	0.5358	0.1025	0.1048	1.0212	1.0000
LIBAN LIRA	5.1435	0.9708	0.9814	8.9589	9.4397
YEMENI DINAR	0.4277	0.0807	0.0824	0.8031	0.7855
EGYPT POUND	4.8164	0.0901	0.9263	0.0448	0.8571
LIBAN LIRA	21.4831	0.0549	0.4108	40.3427	39.5085
US DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2868	0.2722	2.8624	2.8974
GERMAN MARK	0.8527	0.1609	0.1643	1.6012	1.5880
FRANCE FRANC	2.3905	0.4512	0.4506	4.4892	4.3961
NETHERLANDS FLA	1.5689	0.3718	0.3785	3.6574	3.6238
SWITZERLAND FRA	0.0162	1.5131	1.5451	15.0536	14.7416
NETHERLANDS FLA	1.7006	0.3210	0.3278	3.1935	3.1273
NETHERLANDS FLA	2.3905	0.4512	0.4506	4.4892	4.3961
NETHERLANDS FLA	11.4955	0.1552	0.1552	21.4821	21.0369
NETHERLANDS FLA	23.6992	0.4467	0.4462	44.4480	43.9288
NETHERLANDS FLA	48.1907	0.3847	0.3847	92.3744	90.4597
NETHERLANDS FLA	1.7006	0.3210	0.3278	3.1935	3.1273
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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Researcher: Poverty in Jordan is a result of low pay, not unemployment

THE SOCIAL productivity programme, earmarks most of its budget to infrastructure projects that do not directly improve the incomes of the poor and do not suffice their basic needs, a research paper prepared by a former minister said. Accordingly, this "social safety net" will put additional burdens on the budget, he indicated.

Mohammad Sqour, former minister of social development emphasised that the programme lacks the basic element of targeting the poor. "That means not directing specific programmes to the poor social groups," he explained. Sqour criticised the social productivity programme saying it faces the problems of several administrations and institutions participating in planning the components of the programme because coordination and complementation of roles cannot be ensured. "This is a hindrance and waste of effort that Jordan shares with other developing countries," he said.

The research stresses that there is no need for the training programme included in the programme because a vocational training institution exists and it is capable to meet the demand. "The institution has the expertise and experience as well as the sufficient infrastructure without having to bring in funds and new administrators and experts," he emphasised.

Sqour, who is now a professor of social sciences at Irbid University, added that the whole programme requires huge funds some of which cannot be secured except from more borrowing. "This means higher foreign indebtedness that would be spent directly on unproductive schemes," he pointed out.

According to the professor, there are clear disparities and inequalities between social classes and between marginalised, bedouin and rural communities. He said that the relationship between poverty and unemployment is weak whereas the relationship is a strong one between poverty and the wage levels.

In this regard, Sqour said: "The World Bank found poverty in Jordan to be related to low wages more than any other reason."

He indicated that wages account for 62 per cent of the income earned by the poor and that poverty is more in the private sector than it is in the public sector.

Sqour revealed that 23.9 per cent of the poor work in the private sector compared to 10.8 per cent in the public sector.

The researcher did not agree that "guest workers" or non-Jordanian labour represent a phenomenon of low pay workers because they only receive ten per cent less than Jordanians.

Sqour proposed direct intervention such as a wide economic base that would generate growth and surpluses which would help the redistribution of general spending to the benefit of the poor and the regions with low growth. He called for subsidies specifically for the poor and more investments directed to the poor.

Sqour wanted a pricing policy that would contribute to supporting the production of the poor as well as their consumption and employing them. He concluded that the poor should be given the tools and means of production to enable them to become more productive (Al-Dustour).

Cement shares revive AFM

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — The stock market's price index rose by 1.32 points on Sunday as a result of the resumption of trade on shares of the Jordan Cement Factories Company (JCFC) following the government's decision to sell 33.3 of its equity to the French firm Lafarge, a broker said Sunday.

The broker, who asked not to be named, said the price index stood at 162.23 compared to 160.16 points on Sunday

with a turnover amounting to JD2.1 million.

The broker told the Jordan Times that in line with Jordan Security Commission (JSC) instructions, the JCFC share price was floated in the first thirty minutes of the trading. The final price reached during this period was considered as the opening price for the share.

Last month, the JSC ordered the suspension of trading on JCFC shares to facilitate the sale of two third of its 49 per cent equity in the company to

the French firm.

The JD72 million deal covering the purchase price of 20,000,000 JCFC shares at the rate of JD3.600, came in line with the privatisation process the government is undertaking as part of the readjustment programme signed with world international financial institutions. It is expected to restore the government's credibility among foreign investors after last month's decision to suspend the privatisation of the government-owned Jordan

Telecommunications Company (JTC).

The daily Amman Financial Market's (AFM) bulletin showed that the bulk of the turnover was recorded by the JCFC, which accounted for JD1.5 million, or 71.4 per cent of the total turnover.

The bulletin indicated that the JCFC's share was traded at JD2.200 at the beginning of the trade and ended at a limit up of JD2.310.

"The focus was on the cement shares. I believe that the JCFC's share price will continue to rise for little time until it settles at a reasonable price," the broker said.

He noted that among the shares that benefited most from the deal was the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company, which recorded a 100 fils gain for its share price.

The industrial price index closed at 71.94 points, or 4.45 points above the Saturday figure, while the banking sector increased by 0.47 point, up to 270.38 points.

The Arab Bank, the AFM leading share, recorded a 750 fils increase, to JD205, with a turnover of JD116,923, or 5.4 per cent of the total turnover.

World Bank concessional lending arm given \$20 billion

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The world's poorest nations will be eligible to receive \$20.5 billion in interest-free loans for three years starting this July, the World Bank has announced.

It said bilateral donors meeting in Copenhagen had approved a fresh infusion of funds to the bank's concessional lending arm, the International Development Association (IDA).

New contributions from 39 nations totalled \$11.6 billion, with the rest coming from repayment of earlier IDA credits and the World Bank itself.

The new funds will be available for projects from July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2002.

But the amount just approved represents only a small increase over the \$20 billion authorised in the previous three-year funding plan, set to expire next June 30.

World Bank officials have repeatedly warned that foreign aid from rich nations to poor countries has been rapidly eroding in an era of budgetary austerity and global crisis. But Sven Sandstrom, a World Bank managing director, said the latest funding agreement "demonstrates that the international community has not forgotten the poorest countries that are not always in the headlines."

He maintained that "despite the severe budget constraints" experienced by many donors,

they have "reinforced IDA as a cost-effective vehicle for ensuring scarce resources are used to the best possible effect to benefit the world's neediest people."

In the association's fiscal year 1998 — which ended June 30 — the IDA made \$7.6 billion available for 135 new initiatives, most of them investment and economic reform projects.

There are now 80 countries eligible for IDA assistance, representing 3.3 billion people or 80 per cent of the developing world's population.

Most recipients — 2.6 billion people — live in Asia, although 41 of the eligible countries are in Sub-Saharan Africa.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) An older person is bossing you around, and in this case it's probably warranted. You may be trying to do something that you don't really have the experience to carry out. The good news is that you're gaining experience, and this person is actually trying to help.

Taurus: (April 20 to May 20) Your hopes and dreams seem almost within reach today. With a little determination, and the help of a rather pushy loved one, they are. Let yourself be talked into doing something you wouldn't normally do. You're especially likely to be adventurous if you've done your homework. That is the key to your success.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) It looks like the truth is coming out, most likely concerning financial matters. You and your partner are going to be able to figure out how you got into debt, or how to make your next wise investment, or whatever it is you do together. If you don't have a financial partner yet, your best bet is somebody you've known for years.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) Your sign is often associated with entertaining at home, and with being a magnificent cook. If this describes you, you've noticed we're entering the holiday season. You tend to think you're the only one who can do the job well. Get over that, by allowing a partner to help. That'll be more fun for all of you.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) You don't like situations where you don't have control. Why not just accept responsibility and do what needs to be done on purpose? When you merely daydream, you just make yourself miserable. Instead, focus on the job with everything you've got, and whip it into shape. You'll have time left over for what you had in mind all along.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) You're lucky in love today, and it looks like you're supposed to be doing something else. Well, if anyone can organise a schedule effectively, it's you. In fact, you might be able to schedule a few brief, precious moments with your sweetie uninterrupted, even in the middle of a busy day. Give it a try. You've got nothing to lose.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) You love talking to people about philosophical subjects, and you'll get lots of opportunities to do that during the coming few weeks. Each of us has a personal philosophy, of course, but yours always seems to be under construction. This month, you'll find lots of good material to get it fine-tuned just the way you want it.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) Your focus is on finances. Conditions indicate good luck and abundance, but also a tendency to squander, lose things or mismanage your money. Those are all areas to look out for. You'll be learning through experience, which is not a bad way to learn. You don't forget this kind of a lesson.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're lucky in love, you have the ability to produce blinding revivals in others, and your ability to communicate is enhanced. One little problem with that last one, though. Mercury is retrograde right now, so there might be a little confusion. That's most likely to occur today regarding money.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) If there are bureaucracies in your life, and if there's business still to be done with them, this is an excellent time to get that out of the way. You've got just the extra determination you need to tackle a big challenge. Make a list of all the things you're going to get done this month, and get going!

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) You love doing stuff with other people, whether it's partying or having great conversations, solving all the world's problems, or getting out there and taking action. It will all be coming up for you this week, starting with the problems that emerge today. They need your immediate attention, so put everything else on hold.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) You've got a challenging day ahead of you, but your friends are there to support you. They may do that by giving constructive criticism. Isn't that nice of them? Isn't it wonderful that they want to tell you what to do, and it's only for your own good? If you look at it like that, you'll have a much better time today.

Birth Stone of November: Topaz — Tiger's Eye

BIS chief calls for tighter bank credit risk procedures

FRANKFURT (AFP) — Bank for International Settlements (BIS) General Manager Andrew Crockett has called for a tightening of credit risk procedures in industrial countries in the wake of the recent turbulence on the world's financial markets.

Speaking at the Frankfurt European Banking Congress, Crockett said that "lessons have to be learned in the industrial countries from the rather extraordinary episode of market turbulence that began in mid-August."

The Russian debt moratorium on Aug. 17 had "sparked a widespread flight to quality," Crockett explained. This "was followed by a generalised drying-up of liquidity in many markets. This prompted fear that lenders would 'disengage', leading to a credit crunch."

But although the markets had "more recently gained a certain measure of stability, we should try to understand what went wrong and how we can avoid such episodes in the future," Crockett said.

Crockett said that one of the problems was that lenders had had unrealistic expectations about the extent to which their loans to emerging markets would be protected.

"It is therefore important that cross-border lending be

assessed on a stand-alone basis, and that supervisors make sure that the pricing and management of such exposures are not undertaken on a false basis," Crockett said. "In other words, a tightening up of credit risk procedures is called for."

The vice president of the European Commission, Leon Brittan, agreed.

He said that a common feature to the different crises had been the "inadequate regulatory and supervisory frameworks."

It was not the liberalisation of the financial markets "that was

to blame for the recent turmoil in Asia, Russia and beyond," Brittan said. "Orderly, rules-based liberalisation provides the best basis for achieving sustainable growth. We should not allow recent events to blow us off course."

BIS General Manager Crockett said that one of the problems had been that the models used to assess market risk "were based too simplistically on established statistical correlations," Crockett said. "They did not take adequately into account other types of risk, such

as liquidity, volatility and event risk."

Crockett said that clear procedures were needed for dealing with institutions that get into difficulties.

"Too often, troubled banks are allowed to remain in operation as losses mount and their capital erodes," Crockett said. "Forbearance is used to put off difficult decisions in the hope that things will somehow get better on their own. Industrial countries have been just as guilty as developing ones in this regard."

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AL	1.750	1.740	-0.57%	
AL	0.580	0.580	0.00%	
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42 countries to take part in Bangkok Asian Games

BANGKOK (AFP) — A record 42 nations will vie for glory in next month's 13th Asian Games here, with only Afghanistan of the region's Olympic committee members absent, organisers said.

Mongolia was the last country to confirm it would send a team to the December 6-20 event, said Dr. Sakchye Tupsuwan, chairman of the Games' technical committee in a statement.

"The organising committee is very pleased to have confirmations from 42 nations, which will send 6,617 athletes and 2,623 officials, totalling 9,240 per-

sons," he said.

Mongolia is still deciding how many athletes it will send, he added.

Forty-one nations took part in the last Games, in Hiroshima, Japan, four years ago.

Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia has said dwindling finances and changing sports policies forced the country to withdraw from the Games. It had earlier asked Asian Games organisers to change regulations banning beards in boxing so that Afghan athletes could compete.

The fundamentalist Islamic Taliban, which enforces stringent Sharia law,

requires all men to wear untrimmed beards.

The economic turmoil which has swept Asia over the last year is an ever-present shadow over the Games, forcing many countries to downgrade the size of their teams.

During the buildup the Games have been plagued by problems, including anxiety that now-complete venues would not be ready in time and dire predictions that competitors and officials will get stuck in Bangkok's notorious traffic jams.

Asian Games billed as century's last great show — but does Thailand care?

BANGKOK (AFP) — Salesman Krisada Kanpeng has more immediate things on which to focus his attention than the colourful flags and lifelike cutouts of athletes appearing in Bangkok streets to mark next month's Asian Games here.

"Our life is more important than anything — we cannot think of any entertainment if we are still hungry," said Krisada referring to the crippling financial crisis which has put more than a million Thais out of work.

Jurin Laksanavisith, chairman of the Bangkok Asian Games Organizing Committee (BAGOC) Executive Board admits that with Thailand clouded by economic gloom it is hardly surprising people were preoccupied.

"The fever is not high because of economic problems, most people are more worried about the economic situation than the

Games, said Jurin. "But I still believe the fever will be higher from now until the Games start," he said.

The economic turmoil which has swept Asia over the last year is an ever-present shadow over the December 6-20 Games, touted here as "the last great sporting event of the 20th century."

Organisers admit they will fall short of their initial target of 330 million baht (\$9 million) in ticket sales for the opening and closing ceremonies and have had to slash seat prices to spur sales.

Competing nations are also reeling from the turmoil, and many, hampered by draining budgets, have cut the size of their teams or withdrawn from events they have no hope of winning.

Chitraporn Inkaew, a secretary, hit out at ticket prices which she said should be lower given the

parious economic climate. "Although it is only one thousand baht (\$27) it is too high for the public," she said.

Tickets for the opening and closing ceremonies are priced at 1,000 baht. Other events are much cheaper, ranging from 50 to 800 baht.

Pornthip Thipna, a civil servant, said she did not know much about the Games, although she had seen some banners in the streets.

"I have no idea what sports play in which complex," she said.

But Pornthip said she would watch the Games on television to cheer on Thai athletes.

The build-up to the Games has been plagued by problems, including anxiety that venues would not be ready in time and dire predictions that competitors and officials will get stuck in Bangkok's notorious traffic jams.

Some Bangkok residents say the event may have failed to catch the public interest as it will feature few truly international stars.

Others said they would avoid the event because of the risk of being ensnared by Bangkok's notorious traffic jams.

Bangkok Asian Games organisers have supervised the building of a network of elevated expressways and roads in a bid to sweep athletes past the gridlock and pollution of the city's jammed streets.

Krisada said one reason the Games had so far failed to stir much excitement was that they were a minor attraction compared to the last summer's World Cup in France, which was eagerly followed here.

"There was gambling involved in World Cup with a lot of money — that's the reason why people are more interested in it," he said.

Roy Hodgson's reign ends at Blackburn

BLACKBURN (AFP) — Blackburn Rovers manager Roy Hodgson stepped down on Saturday following a string of poor results.

The move came after Rovers slumped to the foot of the English Premiership table following a 2-0 home defeat to fellow strugglers Southampton.

Hodgson once coached Switzerland to the 1994 World Cup finals and had a spell at Inter Milan, as well as guiding Blackburn to sixth place in the table last season and a UEFA Cup spot.

But this season has been a disaster.

The 51-year-old, recently suggested as a possible successor to England supremo Glenn Hoddle, has seen the 1995 Premiership champions win only two of their 14 league games this season, the last on October 3.

"Following the run of recent poor results, Jack Walker and Roy Hodgson have agreed that Roy will be leaving the club," a club spokesman said.

"The club are disappointed at this outcome but feel the decision is inevitable and in the best interests of Blackburn Rovers."

Hodgson had arrived at Ewood Park from Inter Milan in June 1997 as one of Europe's leading coaches.

He was contacted in September by the Germans as a potential successor to Bert Vogts.

He has spent \$35 million on strengthening his side since the end of last season, but instead of challenging for the top he found his team battling against relegation.

Hodgson passed on word through Rovers officials that he would not be commenting on his departure.

Blackburn skipper Tim Sherwood said: "We had no inclination that this was going to happen."

"I think it's harsh to put sole blame on Roy Hodgson, but at the end of the day, results speak louder than words, and we have not been getting them."

Davenport beats Graf to reach showdown with Hingis

NEW YORK (AFP) — The world's top-ranked players reached a showdown at the season-ending WTA Championships here on Saturday — Lindsay Davenport ending the recent success run of Steffi Graf with a three-set victory, and Martina Hingis seeing off Irina Spirlea of Romania who became too nervous when it mattered most.

The powerful 22-year-old Davenport, who is already certain to finish the year as the world number-one, finally defeated five times champion Graf 6-1, 2-6, 6-3 to reach her second Championship final.

In 1994 the big American was beaten in straight-sets in the final by Argentina's Gabriela Sabatini.

Graf, who came into the match after a 12-match winning streak and with two tournament wins since her return after wrist surgery in September, had been bidding to qualify for her seventh final in thirteen visits to the Madison Square Garden.

But the former World No. 1, who is trying to recapture her former glory years after a series of lengthy injury lay-offs, finally ran out of steam against the hard-hitting Davenport.

The 29-year-old German star, the winner of 21 Grand Slam singles titles, was not helped when she suffered a third-set hamstring injury which reduced her mobility. But she shrugged off her defeat and was clearly delighted with her recent form.

"I'm disappointed and everything feels really tired right now. But in general I gave it everything I had in the last three weeks. It's been great, exciting, a lot of fun."

Davenport admitted that it had not been a match of super-quality tennis.

"There are days like this when neither player is able to produce their best tennis. I admit that I didn't feel one hundred per cent warming up and I wouldn't have been surprised to lose. She has been playing so well."

Against Spirlea, Hingis surged back after trailing 1-5 in the second set to survive two set points in the 16-point tie-break.

Spirlea has taken only one set from the 18-year-old Swiss in their six encounters.



Lindsay Davenport of the U.S. reacts after beating Steffi Graf of Germany in their semifinal match at the Chase Championships at Madison Square Garden in New York. Davenport won 6-1, 2-6, 6-3 (AFP photo)



Steffi Graf of Germany reacts after losing a point in the third set in her semifinal match against Lindsay Davenport of the U.S. at the 1998 Chase Championships at Madison Square Garden in New York. Davenport won 6-1, 2-6, 6-3 (AFP photo)

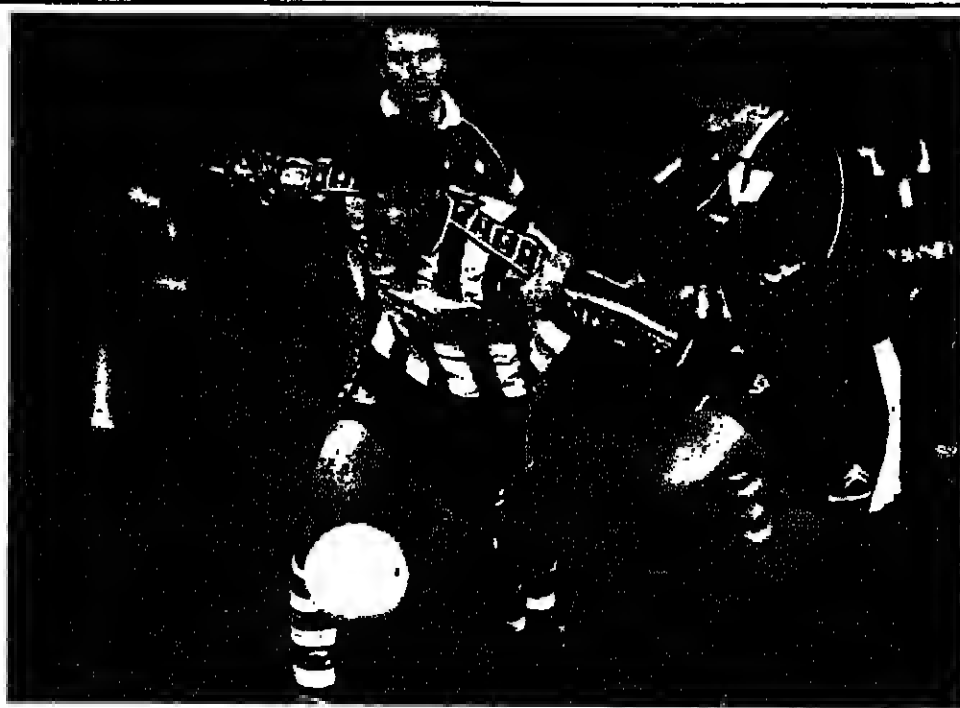
Dunga 1 match away from sayonara to J-League

TOKYO (AFP) — Dunga, the combative midfielder who has guided Brazil to two World Cup finals as captain, says he is only one match away from his sayonara to Japanese football.

"The next match will be may last at (Jubilo) Iwata," the 35-year-old told reporters Saturday after his team, the holders, lost 2-1 here in the opening game of the two-match J-League championship playoff against Kashima Antlers.

"I will think only about winning," said Dunga, who joined the Japanese club a year after leading Brazil to a record fourth World Cup in the United States in 1994. The return match of the J-League championship will be played at Kashima next Saturday.

The combative Dunga said he would take "a little rest" before making up his mind about his future. "At the moment, I have offers from various clubs," Dunga said, adding he has also been offered a staff job on the Brazilian national team.



Manuel Canabal (L) of Deportivo Alavés evades Norwegian Dan Eggen (R) of Celta de Vigo in a Liga match at Mendizorrosa stadium in Vitoria. Alavés won, 2-0 (AFP photo)

Mallorca go top as Betis slip

MADRID (AFP) — Mallorca took over on top of the Spanish first division Saturday when they snatched a 1-0 victory over visiting Barcelona — thanks to an own-goal from Sergi Barjuan after 20 minutes.

And once they had gone ahead it was clear that Barcelona faced an uphill task to find a way through the best defence in the league.

So far this season Mallorca, who have 22 points from 11 matches,

have conceded only four goals.

Celta Vigo slipped to second spot two points behind Mallorca, after losing the only unbeaten record in the division, by crashing to a shock 2-0 defeat at Alavés. Gerard (27) and Sivori (69) were the home side's scorers as Alavés notched up their third win against five defeats and three draws.

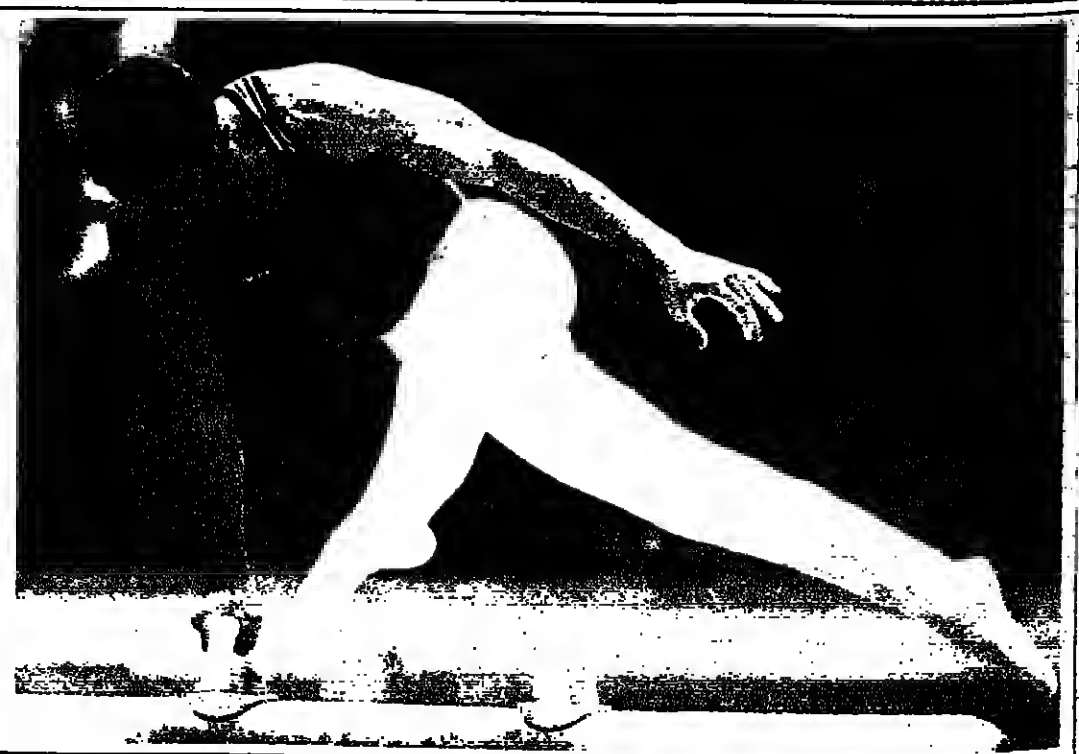
There was no shortage of goals at Atletico where the home side, who trailed to a Julio Cesar header after just two minutes, stormed back

to slam Valladolid 6-1. Mena (27), Jugovic (41), Njegos (46), Correa (59), Kiko (74) and Jose Mari (77) all got on the score-sheet.

Betis made it three wins out of four under Javier Clemente when they came away 1-0 winners from Oviedo — Oli hitting the winner after half-an-hour.

But Valencia made up for their surprise defeat to Extremadura the previous week by hammering visiting Real Madrid 3-1.

Romanian Marius Urzica performs his pommel horse exercise during the Swiss Cup gymnastics event in Zurich. Urzica won the competition (AFP photo)



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Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

LOCAL SPORTS



Jordan 4th in World Judo Championships

JORDAN — The Kingdom achieved its best performance in the World Judo Championships in Tokyo, Japan, as it won four medals. In the 70kg category, Aymar Abu Khadijeh won a bronze medal, while in the 81kg category, Aymar Abu Khadijeh won a silver medal. In the 90kg category, Aymar Abu Khadijeh won a bronze medal. In the 100kg category, Aymar Abu Khadijeh won a bronze medal.

Boxers to leave for

JORDAN — The Jordan Boxing Federation has announced that three players will leave for Tunisia to participate in the 1998 World Boxing Championships. The players are Aymar Abu Khadijeh, Aymar Abu Khadijeh, and Aymar Abu Khadijeh.

What close to volley

JORDAN — Shabab Al Hussein's volleyball team is preparing for the upcoming Asian Games. The team is currently in training and will be competing in the tournament.

Compiled by

SPORTS IN H

Women out of Great Bri

LONDON (AFP) — Terri Williams, the world champion in the 100m butterfly, was forced out of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games after losing a leg. The 29-year-old swimmer was injured during a training session and will not be competing in the Games.

Shield win match, lose

LONDON (AFP) — Sheffield United's victory over Queens Park Rangers in the FA Cup final was overshadowed by the club's loss in the League Cup final. Sheffield United won the FA Cup final 1-0, while Queens Park Rangers won the League Cup final 2-1.

able injury blow for Ar

LONDON (AFP) — Arsenal were hit by a blow as striker Dennis Bergkamp was ruled out of the upcoming season. Bergkamp suffered a knee injury during a training session and will be out of action for several months.

Swimmer gets

LONDON (AFP) — Lithuanian swimmer Ritas Razauskas has been banned for four years from competitive swimming. The ban was imposed by the International Swimming Federation (FINA) after Razauskas was found to have used performance-enhancing drugs.

ready Davis

LONDON (AFP) — Italy's Davis Cup team is ready to defend their title. The team, led by captain Adriano Panatta, will be competing in the Davis Cup final in Rome.

6-floor Top loc

LONDON (AFP) — The new 6-floor Top local Court building is set to be completed by the end of the year. The building will provide additional courtrooms for the legal system.

Building 4-floor

LONDON (AFP) — The new 4-floor building for the Ministry of Health is set to be completed by the end of the year. The building will provide additional office space for the ministry.

1 floor 1 floor

LONDON (AFP) — The new 1-floor building for the Ministry of Education is set to be completed by the end of the year. The building will provide additional office space for the ministry.

Mobi

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Jordan 4th in World Military Taekwondo Championship

AMMAN — The Kingdom achieved 4th overall place at the World Military Taekwondo Championship after two players, Ibrahim Aqil and Mohammad Nawwaf, won the gold and bronze medals. Aqil took first place in the heavyweight category, which included 11 countries, after he beat players from Cyprus, South Korea, and Germany. Nawwaf took 3rd place in the 67kg category, which grouped 10 countries, after he beat a Russian player, but was later defeated by a South Korean player and settled for bronze. Aqil and teammate Mohammad Falah will today leave for China to join the national team which is currently holding a training camp in preparation for the Asian Games which will be held in Bangkok Dec. 6-20.

Top boxers to leave for Tunisia

AMMAN — The Jordan Boxing Federation's recommendations to allow three players to hold a training camp in Tunisia has been approved by the Technical Committee of the Jordan Olympic Committee. Mohammad Abu Khadijeh, Ayman Nadi and Basel Hindawi will hold the camp as part of the federation's preparations for the Asian Games, which will start in Bangkok Dec. 6. Meanwhile the Jordan Swimming Federation's request to include water polo among the events of the next summer's Pan-Arab Games was refused by the committee.

Wihdat close to volleyball title

AMMAN — Shahab Al Hussein's volleyball team Monday meets Al Awdah for a shot at second place of 1998 Jordan Volleyball Championship. Al Wihdat team moved closer to the championship's title after defeating Al Karmel 3-0.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Makinen out of Great Britain rally

CHELTEMHAM (AFP) — Tommi Makinen saw his hopes of winning his third world title in a row wrecked when he was forced out of the Rally of Great Britain on Sunday after losing a wheel. The Finnish driver's exit from the final event of the season was announced by his Mitsubishi team. It leaves the way open for Spaniard Carlos Sainz, Makinen's only rival for the title, to become world champion if he can finish in the first four places. Makinen was forced out of the fifth special stage of the opening day, his team said.

Sheffield win match, lose boss

LONDON (AFP) — Sheffield United won their English first division encounter with Queen's Park Rangers on Saturday but lost assistant manager John Deehan, who was arrested and spent the second-half in a police station. The 41-year-old Deehan, who had been warned to remain in his dug-out by a female police officer, was arrested for swearing and aggressive behaviour when Sheffield United player Petr Kachouro was sent off.

Double injury blow for Arsenal

LONDON (AFP) — Arsenal were hit by a double injury blow on Saturday's 1-0 English Premiership defeat at Wimbledon ahead of next week's crucial Champions' League tie against French club Lens. Midfielder Patrick Vieira was immediately ruled out of the game at Wembley on Wednesday and striker Dennis Bergkamp is rated doubtful. Boss Arsene Wenger conceded that French star Vieira could be missing for another three weeks with a hamstring problem. Wenger, already without Emmanuel Petit through suspension and the ineligible Patrik Ljungberg, admitted: "I don't know what I will do. I will have to see how the injuries are and think about it."

Lithuanian swimmer gets 4-year ban

VILNIUS (AFP) — Lithuanian swimmer Giedrius Rafanavicius has been banned for four years after failing a drug test, the Lithuanian federation revealed on Saturday. Rafanavicius, 21, failed a dope test taken on June 25 at the Lithuanian Games in Vilnius. The Lithuanian swimming federation initially banned him for one year but the sport's international ruling body FINA later increased the ban. Rafanavicius is the second high-profile Lithuanian athlete in pick up a doping ban after 1992 Olympic discus champion Rimas Ubertas was banned for four years in 1993.

Italy ready for Davis Cup

MILAN (AFP) — Italy's Davis Cup squad were in buoyant mood as they arrived here on Sunday to prepare for next month's final against Sweden. Captain Paolo Bertolucci will be putting his team — Andrea Gaudenzi, Diego Nargiso, Gianluca Pozzi and Davide Sanguinetti — through their paces from Monday onwards.

Jordanians head foreign entries in Dubai Rally

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan will spearhead the foreign legion's assault on the Dubai International Rally next week, with five cars looking to make a big impact on the final round of the 1998 FIA Middle East Rally Championship, a statement from the rally's organisers in Dubai said Sunday.

The Jordan contingent, which is one of the largest ever to leave the Hashemite Kingdom for a rally outside the country, adds to the international flavour of an event giving a big climax to this year's Middle East motor sport season on December 3-4.

With its own international rally firmly established as one of the favourites among drivers in the Middle East series, Jordan is a hotbed of motor sport activity, and Jordanian drivers are attempting to have a bigger say in the regional championship.

Heading the Jordanian charge in Dubai is 1997 national champion Mohammad Al Daoud, whose co-driver, Khaled Zakaria, is a two-time winner of the national co-drivers' title.

"I don't remember this many cars heading to a rally outside Jordan before," said

Zakaria. "It's a good rally for us to take part in because we can leave our cars in the UAE for the Abu Dhabi event early next year. It cuts down on shipping costs."

Held under the patronage of Sheikh Ahmad Bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President of Dubai Civil Aviation Department, the Dubai International Rally is organised by the Automobile and Touring Club of the UAE, the national motor sport authority.

With the rally headquarters located at the Al Bustan Rotana Hotel, Dubai Ports Authority and Jebel Ali Free Zone are the official sponsors, with Danka Kodak official suppliers of photocopies, and Emirates computers official suppliers of computers. Ghazal Al Wadi Thwing Services (GTS) also provides vital support.

Zakaria, who drives a Group N Mitsubishi Evolution 3 in Dubai, says motor sport in general is hugely popular in Jordan, with karting introduced to its national sporting calendar this year, attracting over 50 entrants.

"There was a real popularity boom in the 1980s and it has continued steadily from there," said Zakaria. "There's been times when

35 cars have entered for the national rallies and up to 60 for the international rally."

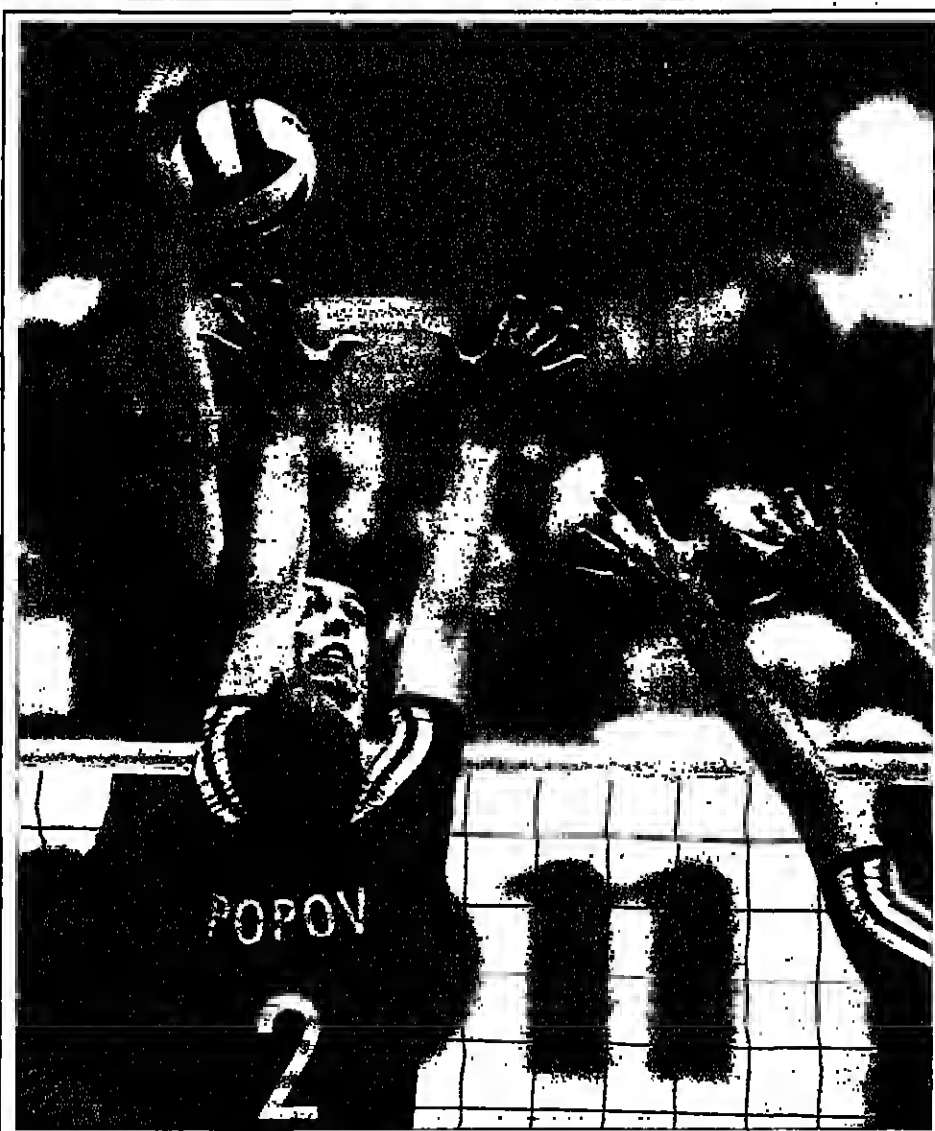
Driving another Group N Mitsubishi is 1995 national champion, Basheer Bustami, while Faris Bustami and Lee Dunn enter Group N Toyota Celicas and Ammar Haddad contests the production class in a Ford Cosworth.

Despite only limited success this season, next year could see the Jordanians mount a serious Middle East challenge, as a number of new sponsorship deals are expected to lead to a stronger Jordanian presence throughout the regional series.

"Most of our drivers enter the Jordan rally and one or two outside of the country, but next season you will probably see us enter a lot more rounds," said Zakaria.

The Jordanians hope to break the 1998 Group N domination by Aussie Ron Cremen and the UAE's Sheikh Abdullah Beo Faisal Al Qassimi, as the rally heads for a title showdown between the two.

The rally has 16 special stages accounting for 292 kilometres, just below the 300-kilometre maximum set for the championship by the FIA, motor sport's world governing body.



Russian volleyball player Stanislav Dinekin (L) spikes a ball while Ukraine Igor Popov (2) attempts to block during their quarter-final round of the Men's Volleyball World Championships in Makuhari. Russia beat Ukraine by 17-15, 15-6, 15-6 (AFP photo)



Jumana Salti (#10) goes up for a layup during Jordan's match against Indonesia at the Asian Championship in Shizuoka, Japan (file photo)

Jumana Salti leads Cornell University team

By a Staff Reporter

Michael Jordan

AMMAN — One of the Kingdom's leading basketball players is now making a name for herself in the United States being identified as Jumana Salti of Amman, Jordan.

Salti, the star centre of the Kingdom's national women's team and Al Jazireh Club, is now on the lineup of her college team at Cornell University where she is leading her team in the NCAA championship.

A transfer from Brigham Young University Provo, Utah, Salti is leading Cornell's team in scoring and rebounding. She scored 19 points and a game-high 13 rebounds in Cornell's season-opening win. Salti also had team-highs of 14 points and 8 rebounds while hitting seven of her nine shots from the floor in another game.

She also tallied 21 points and 17 rebounds to lead Cornell to a 64-48 win over the New York Gazelles.

"She is a strong rebounder and excellent finisher around the basket, and is also a very active defender with the potential to be a top notch shot blocking presence in the paint this season," said a Cornell statement.

Majoring in applied economics and business management, the 22-year-old Salti started playing in the United States after getting a scholarship at BYU in 1995. There Salti proved herself worthy of the "title 'original Jordan'" as she was dubbed by the local press (in reference to basketball great

Salti who played for Al Jazireh where she led her team to the Kingdom's championship in 1993, 1995 and 1996.

Before leaving to pursue her studies in the U.S., where was also a key player of the Kingdom's national team.

Salti took part in the Asian Championship in Shizuoka, Japan in 1995 where she was chosen among the top five players and was named to the Asian Dream Team being Jordan's top score and rebounder.

She also led the Jordan at the Beirut Pan-Arab Games in 1997.

Salti joined her team in Amman this summer where she trained for the local championship which was postponed and then cancelled. The national team's training has also been on hold since the team returned from the Pan-Arab Games.

The Kingdom's national team made history when they were regrouped after a 12-year absence to become the only Arab team at the 1995 Asian Championship. The junior team also took part in the Asian Championship in Bangkok in 1996. However, both national teams have not been regrouped since then although the next Pan-Arab Games in Amman are less than a year away.

Injuries and war cannot keep upstarts from ski podium

PARK CITY (AFP) — Two veterans recovering from injuries and a 16-year-old Croatian whose training was hampered by war outclassed the favourites Saturday in the women's alpine ski World Cup slalom opener.

Slovenia's Urska Hrovat took her fifth World Cup victory in 1min 36.91secs — 38/100ths of a second ahead of Austria's Sabine Egger. Croatian teenage surprise Janica Kostelic was third in 1:37.60.

"It was a great victory for me," Hrovat said. "It will make me much more confident and powerful. I will have more motivation for training."

Hrovat missed two months of summer training with a swollen knee after two screws were removed from a prior operation. Egger had back surgery in April, missed most of the summer and had to alter her technique.

Kostelic has had to overcome lack of funds and facilities in her homeland as well as growing up with the Bosnian-Serb-Croat warfare. "I don't want to mention that. I don't like Yugoslavia,"

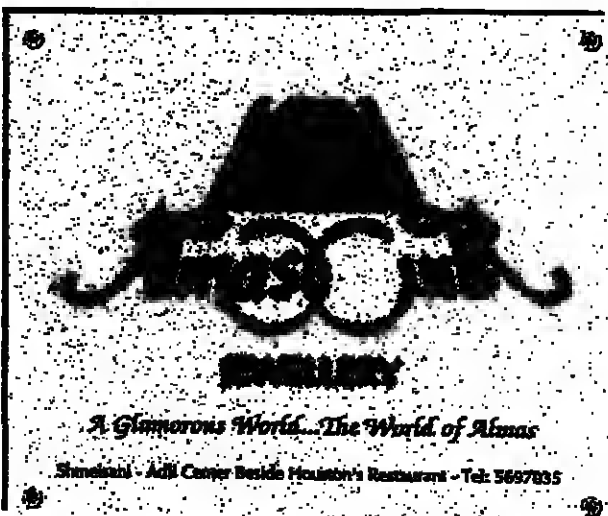
Kostelic said. "I worked hard to get where I am. It was just training and hoping to get better."

Hrovat, last season's World Cup slalom winner, led after a first run of 49.67 secs, 1.1 seconds ahead of Nagano Olympic bronze medalist and defending champion Zali Steggall of Australia.

The 24-year-old Slovenian completed the final descent in 47.24secs for the victory while many of her nearest rivals faded.

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Iraqi opposition meeting opens

LONDON (R) — Britain will on Monday try to persuade members of Iraq's fragmented opposition to work together and help create a credible democratic alternative to President Saddam Hussein.

But there seems little chance that the multitude of groups will suddenly agree to settle their differences at the meeting with junior Foreign Office Minister Derek Fatchett.

"It will be no quick fix. The groups are fragmented but you shouldn't go too far in writing them off. Let's see what happens," a British official said.

Prime Minister Tony Blair said last week that Britain would work together with the United States to strengthen the opposition groups and improve the chances of removing Saddam.

The exiled opposition includes some very diverse religious and ethnic groups with a healthy appetite for infighting.

"The idea that Western policy is now centred on having Saddam driven from power by this rag-bag of opposition would be alarming if it were not so comical," said the Daily Telegraph newspaper.

"There's no great hope these people will come together. There's a lot of grasping at straws going on," said the Middle East expert at one Western embassy.

Although few diplomats and

analysts take the exiled opposition seriously, some said the aim of Monday's talks might be to put psychological pressure on Saddam.

"Part of the game with Saddam is diplomacy and public relations, playing on his sense of paranoia. It may make him act little more foolishly," said Gerald Segal, director of studies at the International Institute for Strategic Studies' think-tank.

"Is it going to be effective in bringing down Saddam's downfall? No, but it might play a small role in a greater operation. The person who replaces Saddam is 99 per cent likely to come from within his existing entourage," he said.

U.S. President Bill Clinton last month signed an act which permits Washington to spend \$93 million on military aid for Saddam's democratic foes, although Britain has ruled out handing over large sums of money or arms at this stage.

Dr. Hamid Al Bayani of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq said he would tell Fatchett the West needed to switch its attention from weapons of mass destruction to what he called Saddam's brutal human rights record.

"To prevent Saddam from using tanks against our people in Iraq would be much better than giving us money or weapons, which are of no use to us. People would think we

Talabani wants no part of plans to oust Saddam

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Iraqi Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani said Sunday that he wanted nothing to do with U.S. plans to boost support for the Iraqi opposition in a bid to overthrow President Saddam Hussein.

"We welcome any international support for the cause of the Kurdish people but we will not take part in foreign plots" aimed at toppling the Iraqi government, said the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), one of the two main rival factions in northern Iraq.

"We think that a change of government is a matter for the progressive forces inside Iraq," said Talabani, who arrived here on Nov. 11 on his first visit for two years.

The other main Kurdish faction in northern Iraq, the rival Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) led by Massud Barzani, has distanced itself from the Iraqi opposition since August 1996 when it sought Baghdad's support in its long-standing feud with the PUK. The PUK leader has been holding talks with other Iraqi opposition leaders here as well as Syrian officials.

The Damascus representative of the main Shiite Muslim opposition umbrella group, the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI), said Saturday that he had held two meetings with Talabani to discuss "different ideas about the political life of the nation after Saddam."

"We discussed the situation in Iraq and what measures to take in light of the crisis between Baghdad and the United Nations over disarmament — and what could amount to a political vacuum in the country," said Bayan Jabr.

were an opposition made in the United States," he said.

Segal said the policy of openly paying more attention to the opposition groups could backfire.

"The risk is that it will lead some to believe that Western policy has effectively changed

and might lead them to mount operations which would be disastrous," he said.

Saddam's troops crushed a CIA-backed Iraqi opposition base in Kurdish-held northern Iraq in 1996 in a major blow to Western attempts to unite Baghdad's foes.

Palestinian opposition group hails Arafat over withdrawal

GAZA CITY (AFP) — A Palestinian Islamist group opposed to the Wye River peace accord with the Israelis nevertheless congratulated Palestinian President Yasser Arafat Sunday for securing a partial Israeli troop withdrawal from the West Bank.

"We congratulate you as well as the Palestinian people on the occasion of the retreat of the Zionist occupiers from a precious part of our homeland," the Islamic Salvation Party said in a let-

ter to Arafat obtained by AFP.

"Despite our position on the peace agreement, any Israeli evacuation from our territory takes us closer to our goal of a complete liberation and the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital," said the group, which has close links to moderates within the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas).

The Israeli army began its pullout from the West Bank

on Friday and is due to make two further withdrawals, in four and 12 weeks respectively, as part of the Wye agreement.

Hamas has asked human rights groups to pressure the Palestinian National Authority into releasing from house arrest its spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, who is being detained as part of a crackdown on anti-Israeli violence as called for by the Wye accord.

Americans visiting Iran under fire

TEHRAN (AFP) — A group of Islamist hardliners attacked a car carrying a group of Americans visiting Iran on Saturday, a newspaper reported Sunday.

Kayhan daily said a group of people chanting "Death to America" assaulted the vehicle near the Ehsan hotel in northern Tehran, where the Americans had been staying.

They broke the windows of the car, but none of the occupants were hurt.

Kayhan said a senior Iranian official later arrived at the hotel to apologise to the Americans and take them to lunch.

The 13 Americans decided to cut their trip short and left Tehran for Washington on Saturday night.

The visit by the Americans had stirred up a controversy in the Islamic republic, with conservative politicians and hardline newspapers accusing them of being spies disguised as tourists.

In an article Sunday headlined "What are America's Political Agents Doing in Tehran?" the fundamentalist Jumhuri Islami said the group of Americans included several "senior CIA officials."

Jumhuri and several other hardline newspapers accused the visitors of seeking to gather political information, while others said they were in Iran to explore investment opportunities and hold talks with officials.

The daily charged that the foreign ministry had contravened strict orders by Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei not to have official contact with the United States.

Egypt's parliament ratifies Arab League anti-terrorism pact

CAIRO (AFP) — The Egyptian parliament on Sunday ratified a convention adopted by the 22-nation Arab League that calls for increased cooperation in the fight against terrorism, parliamentary officials said.

The document defines as terrorism "any act of violence or threat of violence, no matter what the motivation or objective, that aims to carry out a criminal act in order to provoke terror or endanger the life, freedom and security of the population."

The convention was ratified by an overwhelming majority despite some heated discussion over a clause in the document that makes a distinction between terrorism and "political crimes."

The clause explicitly

defines six cases — attacks against presidents, vice presidents, kings, crown princes, ministers of the signatory nations and any people such as diplomats and ambassadors under international protection — that cannot be excused as political crimes under any circumstances and must be classified as terrorist acts.

"The penal codes of Arab nations make no mention of the concept of a political crime, and it was unnecessary to include this clause in the convention," said Fathi Srur, the parliamentary speaker.

Zazariya Azmi, head of President Hosni Mubarak's cabinet, said it was regrettable that "aggression against members of parliament was not included in the list."

Turkish deputy PM expects government to fall soon

NICOSIA (R) — Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit said on Sunday he expected to be out of office within three days, ousted by an opposition censure motion.

"This will be my last visit as a member of a government that will most probably be leaving in three days' time," he told reporters during a trip to the breakaway enclave of northern Cyprus.

Turkey's parliament on Wednesday votes on what is effectively a test of confidence in the minority coalition.

The parties proposing the censure motion account for far more than the 276 votes needed to topple the gov-

ernment in the 550-seat assembly.

The motion follows allegations of high-level corruption in Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz's government over the \$600 million sell-off of a bank in August.

The government is also embroiled in a fierce row with Italy over Rome's rejection of a Turkish arrest warrant for Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan.

Ecevit was prime minister in 1974 when Turkish troops invaded the north of the island in response to a Greek Cypriot coup backed by Athens. Turkey maintains some 30,000 troops there and alone recognises the Turkish Cypriot state.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli air raids on southern Lebanon

TYRE (AFP) — Israeli warplanes carried out raids on Sunday against anti-Israeli guerrillas in southern Lebanon. Lebanese police said. No casualties were reported. Two fighter-bombers fired missiles at suspected guerrilla hideouts across from Israeli army positions, police said. In Tel Aviv, an Israeli military spokesman said "our planes attacked enemy positions in the western sector of southern Lebanon and returned safely to base." The raid followed mortar attacks against five positions of the Israeli army and allied South Lebanon Army in southern Lebanon. The attacks did not cause any casualties.

Iranian opposition leader assassinated

TEHRAN (AFP) — An Iranian opposition leader and his wife were assassinated at their home in the Iranian capital Sunday, state television reported. Daryoush Foruhar, a former labour minister, and his wife, Parvaneh, were killed in their house in eastern Tehran by unknown assailants. Police have launched a manhunt for their killers. Police headquarters told the official news agency IRNA that a close aide of Foruhar said he and his wife were stabbed to death at their home. Police said they were still looking for a motive for the killing.

Iran gives green light to policewomen

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's parliament approved a draft law Sunday allowing for the recruitment of women to the police force, "as long as they respect Islamic criteria including dress codes and gender segregation." Since the 1979 Islamic revolution, the police has restricted women employees to clerical positions, although there were female officers under the shah's regime. According to the bill, which was approved at a parliamentary session broadcast live on state radio, the new officers will be trained to become driving test examiners, to carry out body searches on women, deliver passports and enforce Islamic dress and public moral codes in cities.

'Kidnap' victims in fact taken by police

KHARTOUM (AFP) — The alleged "kidnapping" last week of four employees of the Libyan cultural centre in Khartoum was Sunday revealed to be the work of Sudan's secret police. Although the men, one of whom was armed with a Kalashnikov, who took the four from their office on Wednesday identified themselves as police officers, a police spokesman said later they were only posing as such and described the incident as a "kidnapping." Following a complaint by the Libyan centre the Sudanese police made efforts to find the kidnapped people and their abductors but it turns out that they were summoned by the Sudanese secret police, a police spokesman General Abdul Raham Mokhtar told reporters on Sunday. The four were released Friday after unspecified questioning, he added.

Three drown in a well in Yemen

SANAA (AP) — Three men drowned in a well in western Yemen when they tried to remove a dead cat, the Al Thawra newspaper reported Sunday. The owner of a well in the town of Hodeida on Thursday asked a man specialised in cleaning wells to remove a cat that had died in his well a week earlier, the paper said. The man took a rope to climb down the well but fainted from the stench and drowned, the paper said. It said his brother and another man followed him into the well and also drowned. A fourth went down to rescue the men but was also unable to climb back up. He was saved when the police arrived and pulled him out. The police also retrieved the bodies of the three men and the cat.

Turkish woman gives birth over Austria

VIENNA (AFP) — A young Turkish woman gave birth to a baby girl on Sunday on a flight from Turkey to Germany while the plane was over Austria, the Austrian news agency reported. Zeliha Dogan, 18, went into labour on board the Air Alfa plane which had taken off from Antalya en route for Stuttgart. Members of the crew and a mother of two helped her give birth. The plane, which had 250 passengers on board, made an emergency landing in Vienna before taking off again an hour and a half later for Stuttgart. An airport spokesman said mother and baby had been taken to hospital in the Austrian capital and were both doing fine.

Turks burn Italian clothes, Fiat in anger over freeing of Ocalan

ANKARA (AP) — Turks angered by Italy's release of a Kurdish rebel leader rallied by the thousands in front of the Italian Embassy on Sunday, part of a day of student protests that had Turks burning Italian-made clothes and setting fire to a Fiat.

Children stood waving the Turkish flag in the capital as scores of trucks drove past blaring their horns and bearing banners that declared: "An end to trade with Italy."

Hundreds of companies and business groups have announced a boycott of Italian goods, seeking to punish Italy for its refusal to extradite Turkey rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan, who came to Rome on Nov. 12 seeking asylum.

On Friday, a Rome court rejected a Turkish arrest warrant for Ocalan, freeing him. The court cited Italian law forbidding extradition of suspects to countries where they might face the death penalty.

Turkey considers Ocalan the most ruthless of terrorists. Rebels of his Kurdish Labour Party, or PKK, have fought for Kurdish autonomy since 1984; close to 37,000 have died.

"We are not angry at the

Italian people, but we are very angry at the Italian prime minister," said Nesrin Tureli, one of the thousands chanting before the embassy.

Demonstrations took place throughout Turkey, with protesters burning Italian clothes and puppets of Ocalan. A car of the Italian Fiat brand was burned in the western town of Izmit. In Adana, protesters reportedly burned a picture of Italian Premier Massimo D'Alema.

Although the week of protests has been peaceful, Turkish politicians have called for calm, fearing the rallies may turn violent. Signalling that Turkey would not tolerate any display of support for the rebels, police have detained more than 3,000 members of the pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party since Ocalan's arrest. Most have since been released; their leader was arrested and charged with being a member of the PKK.

The Germany-based Kurdish News Agency reported Sunday that a member of the party was beaten to death Thursday in police custody. Officials denied the allegations, which could not be independently verified.

Opera comes to Palestinian territory, wins ovation

GAZA (R) — Not so many years ago, Palestinian children in Gaza were throwing stones at Israeli soldiers.

On Saturday night, 28 of them formed the chorus for an adaptation of Georges Bizet's *Carmen* and sang in French in the first performance of an opera on Palestinian-ruled soil. "This was an act of pride. Our children were great," said Jamal Salem, 29, who brought his wife to the packed premiere at a cultural centre in Gaza.

Many of the eight- to 10-year-olds in the chorus were from the refugee camps of Gaza, a cauldron of unrest against Israeli occupation from 1987 until Palestinian self-rule in 1994.

The only violence on Saturday night was on stage when the gypsy beauty Carmen was stabbed by her policeman lover Don Jose in the climax to a torrid tale of passion, jealousy and honour set in Seville, Spain.

Four French singers played the lead roles in the opera, which won a standing ovation from 800 enthusiastic spectators. Some threw red carnations at the singers. Others whistled and muttered under their breath when certain scenes failed to finish with a kiss.

The show was catted

"Carmen-Palestine." A Palestinian actor guided the audience through the plot with a narration in Arabic. "The romantic scenes were good. It showed how much love was valuable to people. Carmen was very clever to enslave all the men and remain free herself," said Shadi Al Agha, 20, who came with a group of friends.

Palestinians who had seen the opera before said some of the more romantic scenes had been toned down to suit the conservative society of Gaza.

"It was done in a conservative way. Having seen this opera in Europe, I think it was all right," said Gaza City Mayor Awn Al Shawa.

He said Gaza, which is beset by poverty and social deprivation, had been starved of such cultural activities for too long.

"Culture in Palestine has been frozen due to continuous wars and fights against the [Israeli] occupation. Now that we are settled on a part of our land, it is time to reactivate our culture," he said.

Gaza and the West Bank have little in the way of public entertainment. There is only one cinema, in the West Bank town of Ramallah, and no formal theatres except in Arab east Jerusalem.

"If our culture is to prevail,



Palestinian children make up a chorus in Georges Bizet's *Carmen* performed late on Saturday in the Gaza Strip as they join French singer Nathalie Espallier playing Carmen and Patrice Perger. It was the first performance of an opera under the Palestinian National Authority. The Palestinian children, aged eight to ten years old, sang in French (Reuters photo)

we need more events like this. We need an exchange of culture," said Ahmad Khalil 17.

Carmen-Palestine was produced with financial and other support from the French government cultural centre in Jerusalem and the United

Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It will also be staged at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank and in Arab east Jerusalem.

"We were anxious and a little bit afraid, but we were excited and we were happy with the

reaction of the people," said French singer Nathalie Espallier, who played the role of Carmen.

"It was a pleasure to sing Carmen here because Carmen is a symbol of liberty," she told Reuters after the show.

Naked attempt radio record

WEIPA (AP) — Organisers of the annual Running of Bulls charity event are hoping for an entry into the Guinness Record Book — a live radio interview involving almost 200 nude men. The naked runners packed around a telephone booth for an interview Sunday with Australian Broadcasting Corp. after completing a number of laps of Curricular Way, 2,350 kilometres northwest of the state capital of Brisbane. "We don't believe an interview like this has ever been done before, so we'll apply to the Guinness book of records to get it officially recognised," said event founder Nigel Gould.

'Titanic' star Kate Winslet weds

READING (AP) — Kate Winslet, star of the Oscar-winning movie "Titanic," was married Sunday to assistant film director Jim Threapleton in a quiet ceremony at her family's local church. About 150 guests, including actress Emma Thompson and actor Greg Wise, attended the afternoon wedding at All Saints' Church in Reading, southern England. After the half-hour service, the 23-year-old actress, in a white Edwardian-style gown, posed briefly for photographs with her new husband, 25, who wore a suit with a dark frock coat.

Would-be Santas too thin

LONDON (R) — British stores are desperately seeking fat elderly actors to play Santa in their Christmas grottos. "They're too thin. You cannot just strap a cushion on them and hope to fool the kids," said a spokesman for the Ministry of Fun entertainment agency, which sent off a plea for plumper recruits. "We just cannot find any suitable actors who are still, shall we say, on the porky side. All the applicants seem to live on salads and look after their bodies."

Celebrities donate watches to charity

GENEVA (AP) — Have you ever dreamed of walking around on the arm of a hunky leading man or a sleek supermodel? Here's the next best thing — a chance to walk around with a watch that's been on the arm of a celebrity. Seventy-five celebrities have donated watches for a New York auction to raise money for charity, watch auctioneer Antiquorum announced Friday. All of the money raised from the Feb. 24 sale will go to charities nominated by the donors, whose choices range from the Children of Chernobyl Foundation to the Palm Beach School of Arts.

Biometric security set to replace keys

LAS VEGAS (AFP) — Once confined to James Bond movies, "biometric" security devices that rely on personal characteristics — fingerprints, voices or faces — may become the keys and magnetic cards of tomorrow. "The biometrics field as a whole is past the embryonic stage," said Christopher Tomes, chief of Veritel, one of scores of companies at the Fall Comdex show here last week. "It's a real technology and it works." Intelligence services and companies that require high security have relied on biometrics for some 20 years. But this futuristic technology familiar to fans of Agent 007 is just now entering the mainstream.